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ABSTRACT

This proceedings contains 59 conference papers and presentation summaries concerned with rural special education. The papers are arranged in 11 sections covering at-risk students, collaborative education models, early childhood education, impacting governmental policy, inservice teacher and administrator education, multicultural education, parents and families, preservice teacher education, distance education and technology, transition practices, and other. The papers provide a rural perspective on various topics, including discipline problems and behavior management, team building, use of paraprofessionals, academic accommodations, college-school collaboration, peer tutoring, professional development in rural areas, classroom techniques, teacher recruitment and retention, the role of rural school principles in special education, multicultural education, parent participation, working with minority group families of children with disabilities, alternative teacher certification, distance education practices, Web-based instruction, transition strategies, alternate assessment, and classroom research. An author index is included. (SV)

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American Council on Rural Special Education

No Child Left Behind: The Vital Role of Rural Schools

22nd Annual National Conference

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ACRES 2002 Proceedings

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Keynote Address

Managing Paraeducators in Rural Inclusive Classrooms
Wendy F. Dover, Winthrop University 1

At Risk

Coping Patterns Of Students With Behavior Disorders In Elementary, Middle, And High Schools
Theodore J. Montemurro, San Jose State University 8

Creating Classrooms In Rural Settings That Prevent Discipline Problems
Nedra Skaggs Wheeler and Alice Glover Anderson, Radford University 13

Empowering Children To Change
Jayetta Rasmussen and Deborah Lund, Jefferson School District #251 18

Four Blocks: A Literacy Model For Diverse, Rural Schools
Lynne C. Ruegamer, CCSD J.L. Bowler Elementary School 23

Vocational Knowledge And Skills For The Future
John K. Burke and James Flessner, Neodesha USD 461 25

Collaborative Education Models

Collaborative Team Building From A Distance
Margaret M. Cramer and Kathryn M. Bell, Southern Utah University; Mary Warren, Western Kentucky University 28

Instructional Management Of Paraeducators In Inclusive Classrooms: The Perspectives Of The Teachers
Wendy F. Dover, Winthrop University 33

Let's Work Tegether
Kevin J. Miller and Wilfred D. Wienke, University of Central Florida 41

Section 504: The Other Service Option For Children With Disabilities
John Copenhaver, Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center 44

Special Educators As Consultants: Rural - Urban Comparisons Across Ten Years
Linda P. Thurston and Ann Knackendoffel, Kansas State University 49

There's Snow On The Pass And The Itinerant Has No Snow Shoes
Alberta J. Thyfault, Central Washington University 52

Utilizing Paraeducators As Liaisons To The Local Community
Michael J. Hermanson and Tina Hoagland, Montana Center on Disabilities 54

What Can I Use Tomorrow? Strategies For Accessible Math And Science Curriculum For Diverse Learners In Rural Schools
B. Keith Salyer, Christina Curran and Alberta Thyfault, Central Washington University 59

Early Childhood

Assessing Quality Inclusive Child Care Placements For Young Children With Special Needs
Martie Kendrick, Center for Community Inclusion/University of Maine; Nancy Poulin, Child Development Services/PEDS 70

Creativity And Technology: Recipe For Successful Inclusion With The Kite Model
Jean Nelson, PACER Center 75

Impacting Governmental Policy

Avoiding Special Education Litigation In Rural School Districts
Debora L. Scheffel, Harvey Rude and Barbara Rhine, University of Northern Colorado 78

Making An Exceptional Difference In Education: A Collaborative University/School Partnership To Prime The Special Education Pipeline
Christina Curran, Connie Lambert, Debra Prigge, David Majsterek, Alberta Thyfault and Dan Fennerty, Central Washington University 82

Inservice

"Could You Please Tell My New Teacher?" Developing Transition Portfolios
MaryAnn Demchak and Marty Elquist, University of Nevada-Reno 90

Curriculum Reform For Inclusion: Infusing Issues Of Social Justice And Caring
Junean J. Gourley, University of Nevada-Reno 91

Developing A Peer Tutor Training Program That Fits Your Local Needs
Guy H. Gilberts, University of Texas Pan American 96

Do Federal Mandates Leave Rural Students Behind? Suggestions For Providing Professional Development In Rural States
Kate Mitchem and Ann Richards, West Virginia University 103

Facilitating Adolescents With Disabilities Understanding Of Area And Perimeter Concepts Via Manipulative Instruction
Mike Cass and Dennis Cates, Cameron University; Cynthia W. Jackson, State University of West Georgia; Michelle Smith, Cameron University 105

How Can We Keep Our Good Teachers?
Georgine Steinmiller and Robert Steinmiller, Henderson State University; Terry Wallis, Vanderbilt University 110

Project Renew: Renewing General Educators For Inclusion
Ellen Ratcliff and Myra Rogers, Southeastern Louisiana University 112

The Role Of The Rural School Principal On The IEP Team
James O. Tate, Southwestern Oklahoma State University 117

Through Alice's Looking Glass: Studying Ourselves To Learn More About Our Students
Tammy V. Abernathy, University of Nevada-Reno; Teresa Agey, Pau Wa Lu Middle School 121

Wisdom From Those Who Do It Well: Special Education Master Teachers
Catherine Shea and Carolyn Babione, Indiana University Southeast .....

Multicultural

Rural Multicultural Field-Based Teacher Education: Program Designs, Curriculum Materials, And Distance Education Technology
Patricia J. Peterson, Catherine Medina, Stephen Showalter and James Gilmer, Northern Arizona University 136

Shifting Assessment And Intervention Paradigms For Rural Learners
Sunday Obi, Kentucky State University 140

Parents and Families

No Child Left Behind Through Collaboration: Parents and Professionals as Partners
Retta Dermody, Nevada Parents Encouraging Parents 146

Parents Training Parents: A Vital Role For Increasing Parental Involvement In Education
Shelia Y. Smalley and David P. Fuller, University of Central Florida 149

Partnering With Latino Migrant Families Of Children With Disabilities: A Challenge, A Mission
Maria Reyes-Blanes, University of Central Florida 152

Preservice

Alternative Special Education Teacher Certification Practices
Harvey A. Rude, University of Northern Colorado 158

Bridging The Gap: Paraeducators To Teachers
Marjorie Schiller, Central Arizona College 164

Evaluating The Development Of Teaming In A Rural University Clinical Experience Using Three Instructor-Designed Instruments
Billie L. Friedland and Lynn M. Walz, Eastern Illinios University 168

An Evaluation Of A Decade Of A Rural Field-Based Special And Elementary Teacher Training Program
Catherine Medina, Denise Redsteer and Greg Prater, Northern Arizona University; Sam Minner, Truman State University 172

Get On Board! Alternative Certification As A Means To Combat Teacher Shortages
Michael E. Sullivan, Marshall University Graduate College 176

A Look At Variables Affecting Parent Satisfaction With IEP Meetings
Sharon (Sherry) Miles-Bonart, New Mexico State University 180

Preparing The Best Teachers For Our Children
June Canty Lemke, Gonzaga University 188

A Qualified Special Educator For Every Student: Why This Isn't Happening And What Can Be Done About It?
Lori Garnes, Ronda Menlove, and Elizabeth Adams, Utah State University 194

Strategies For Teaching Digital Accessibility Guidelines In Preservice General Education
Loye Romereim-Holmes and Denise M. Peterson, South Dakota State University 200

Tools Of The Trade: Effective Strategies To Support The Collaboration Of Educators In Rural Schools
B. Keith Salyer, Alberta Thyfault and Christina Curran, Central Washington University 204

Where Have All The Teachers Gone?
Kathleen Chinn and Elissa WolfePoel, New Mexico State University 211

Technology

Building Student Interaction In Online Distance Education Through The Use Of Voice Chat
Melina Alexander and Don Stenhoff, Utah State University 218

Building Understanding Through Technology
H. Timothy Blum, University of Wyoming Lab School ACSD #1; Mike Bates, Cheyenne Wells Middle School; D. J. Yocom, University of Wyoming 220

Comparative Evaluation Of Distance And On Campus Education: Is The Deck Stacked?
John Hinds, Utah State University 224

Computer Illiteracy: Implications For Distance Education
Claudia A.Edmondson, Ronda Menlove and Ben Lignugaris/Kraft, Utah State University 228

Measuring Teacher Behaviors In Distance Learning Courses
Belva C. Collins and Jennifer Grisham-Brown, University of Kentucky 232

Using A Web-Based Tutorial To Teach The IEP Process
Christine O. Cheney, University of Nevada-Reno 236

Using Writing Strategies And Visual Thinking Software To Enhance The Written Performance Of Students With Mild Disabilities
Regina B. Blair, Christine Ormsbee and Joyce Brandes, University of Oklahoma 242

Webcasting: A New Technology For Training Special Educators In Rural Areas
Barbara L. Ludlow, West Virginia University; Michael C. Duff, Discover Video Productions 246

Transition

Exemplary Transition Practices In Wood County, West Virginia
Belinda Bennett and Denise Nolan, Wood County Schools/CIWP 252

Individualized Transition Planning For Students With Learning Disabilities In Rural Areas
Cleborne D. Maddux and Rhoda Cummings, University of Nevada-Reno 257

Meeting The Transition Needs Of Students In Rural Settings: Two New Resources From The U.S. Department Of Education
Jane M. Williams, University of Nevada-Las Vegas; Ed O'Leary, Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center 260

Rural Students With Disabilities And Postsecondary Education: An ACRESs Survey
Greg Clary, Clarion University 265

Other

Alternate Assessment: No Child Left Behind During Statewide Testing
Karen D. Hager and Timothy A. Slocum, Utah State University 268

Screening For Vision Problems In Children With Hearing Impairments
MaryAnn Demchak and Mary Elquist, University of Nevada-Reno 274

Success With Reluctant Researchers: Real Life Experiences In A Rural School Setting
Belva C. Collins, University of Kentucky; Meada Hall, Eastern Kentucky University; Terri A. Branson, East Jessamine High School 279

AUTHOR INDEX

Abernathy, Tammy
University of Nevada-Reno 121

Adams, Elizabeth
Utah State University 194

Agey, Teresa
Pau Wa Lu Middle School 121

Alexander, Melina
Utah State University 218

Anderson, Alice Glover
Radford University 13

Babione, Carolyn
Indiana University Southeast 128

Bates, Mike
Cheyenne Wells Middle School 220

Bell, Kathryn M.
Southern Utah University 28

Bennett, Belinda
Wood County Schools/CIWP 252

Blair, Regina B.
University of Oklahoma 242

Blum, H. Timothy
Albany Co School District/University of Wyoming 220

Brandes, Joyce
University of Oklahoma 242

Branson, Terri A.
East Jessamine High School 279

Burke, John K.
Neodesha USD 461 25

Cass, Mike
Cameron University 105

Cates, Dennis
Cameron University 105

Cheney, Christine O.
University of Nevada-Reno 236

Chinn, Kathleen
New Mexico State University 211

Clary, Greg
Clarion University 265

Collins, Belva C.
University of Kentucky 233, 279

Copenhaver, John
Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center 44

Cramer, Margaret M.
Southern Utah University 28

Cummings, Rhoda
University of Nevada-Reno 257

Curran, Christina
Central Washington University 59, 82, 204

Demchak, MaryAnn
University of Nevada-Reno 90, 274

Dermody, Retta
Nevada Parents Encouraging Parents 146

Dover, Wendy F.
Winthrop University 1, 33

Duff, Michael C.
Discover Video Productions 246

Edmondson, Claudia A.
Utah State University 228

Elquist, Marty
University of Nevada-Reno 90, 274

Fennerty, Dan
Central Washington University 82

Flessner, James
Neodesha USD 461 25

Friedland, Billie L.
Eastern Illinios University 168

Fuller, David
University of Central Florida 149

Garnes, Lori
Utah State University 194

Gilberts, Guy H.
University of Texas Pan American 96

Gilmer, James
Northern Arizona University 136

Gourley, Junean
University of Nevada-Reno 91

Grisham-Brown, Jennifer
University of Kentucky 233

Hager, Karen D.
Utah State University 268

Hall, Meada
Eastern Kentucky University 279

Hermanson, Michael J.
Montana Center on Disabilities 54

Hinds, John
Utah State University 224

Hoagland, Tina
Montana Center on Disabilities 54

Jackson, Cynthia W.
State University of West Georgia 105

Kendrick, Martie
Center for Community Inclusion/University of Maine 70

Knackendoffel, Ann
Kansas State University 49

Lambert, Connie
Central Washington University 82

Lemke, June Canty
Gonzaga University 188

Lignugaris/Kraft, Ben
Utah State University 228

Ludlow, Barbara L.
West Virginia University 246

Lund, Deborah
Jefferson School District # 251 18

Maddux, Cleborne D.
University of Nevada-Reno 257

Majsterek, David
Central Washington University 82

Medina, Catherine
Northern Arizona University 136, 172

Menlove, Ronda
Utah State University 194, 228

Miles-Bonart, Sharon
New Mexico State University 180

Miller, Kevin J.
University of Central Florida 41

Minner, Sam
Truman State University 172

Mitchem, Kate
West Virginia University 103

Montemurro, Theodore J.
San Jose State University 8

Nelson, Jean
PACER Center 75

Nolan, Denise
Wood County Schools/CIWP 252

O'Leary, Ed
Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center 260

Obi, Sunday
Kentucky State University 140

Ormsbee, Christine
University of Oklahoma 242

Peterson, Denise M.
South Dakota State University 200

Peterson, Patricia J.
Northern Arizona University 136

Poel, Elissa Wolfe
New Mexico State University 211

Poulin, Nancy
Child Development Services/PEDS 70

Prater, Greg
Northern Arizona University 172

Prigge, Debra
Central Washington University 82

Rasmussen, Jayetta
Jefferson School District # 251 18

Ratcliff, Ellen
Southeastern Louisiana University 112

Redsteer, Denise
Northern Arizona University 172

Reyes-Blanes, Maria
University of Central Florida 152

Rhine, Barbara
University of Northern Colorado 78

Richards, Ann
West Virginia University 103

Rogers, Myra
Southeastern Louisiana University 112

Romereim-Holmes, Loye
South Dakota State University 200

Rude, Harvey A.
University of Northern Colorado 78, 158

Ruegamer, Lynne
J.L. Bowler Elementary School 23

Salyer, B. Keith
Central Washington University 59, 204

Scheffel, Debora L.
University of Northern Colorado 78

Schiller, Marjorie
Central Arizona College 164

Shea, Catherine
Indiana University Southeast 128

Showalter, Stephen
Northern Arizona University 136

Slocum, Timothy A.
Utah State University 268

Smalley, Shelia
University of Central Florida 149

Smith, Michelle
Cameron University 105

Steinmiller, Georgine
Henderson State University 110

Steinmiller, Robert
Henderson State University 110

Stenhoff, Don
Utah State University 218

Sullivan, Michael
Marshall University Graduate College 176

Tate, James
Southwestern Oklahoma State University 117

Thurston, Linda P.
Kansas State University 49

Thyfault, Alberta
Central Washington University 52, 59, 82, 204

Wallis, Terry
Vanderbilt University 110

Walz, Lynn M.
Eastern Illinois University 168

Warren, Mary
Western Kentucky University 28

Wheeler, Nedra Skaggs
Radford University 13

Wienke, Wilfred D.
University of Central Florida 41

Williams, Jane M.
University of Nevada-Las Vegas 260

Yocom, D. J.
University of Wyoming 220

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MANAGING PARAEDUCATORS IN RURAL INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

The title of this presentation may lead one to think of a very specific, narrowly focused discussion. In actuality, the information of this presentation could fit a wide variety of audiences and situations. A simple change of words would allow the information to fit any number of situations. For example, the word "paraeducator" could be replaced with:

- Paraprofessional
- Instructional aide
- Classroom aide
- Teacher aide
- Therapy aide
- Therapy assistant
- Instructional assistant
- Instructional support aide
- Teacher assistant
- Instructional assistant
- Assistant
- Educational technician
- Job coach
- Shadow
- Para
- Parapro

Paraeducators are known by many titles (French, 1998; Mueller, 1995; Pickett, Faison, and Formanek, 1999), but their overall role is the same - to provide support and assistance to teachers and therapists in providing quality and individualized instruction for children with disabilities in today's schools and other educational and service sites (Palma, 1994).

"Rural" could be replaced with suburban or urban. The employment of paraeducators is increasing across the country and is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2008 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000).

Paraeducators are being used in inclusive classrooms to support the placement of students with special needs in general education classes and curriculum (Lamont and Hill, 1991; Vergun and Chambers, 1995). This is a relatively new development, when one considers the history of paraeducator use. Paraeducators in special education began providing support in clinical and restrictive settings, such as hospitals, special day schools and self-contained classrooms during the 1950s and 60s (Pickett and Gerlach, 1997). As special education services have grown toward less restrictive placements, paraeducators have been used to support those placements, as well. Since paraeducators now provide support in a wide range of placements, the term "inclusive" in the title could be replaced with any of the following placement descriptions.

- Resource
- Self-contained
- Alternative
- Special school
- Homebound
- Hospital

Finally, the term "classroom" is also interchangeable. Paraeducators are providing support and services to students in a wide variety of educational and community settings, not just classrooms (Dover, 2000). We could replace "classrooms with:

- Hallways
- Lunchrooms
- Workrooms
- Front/back of school
- Bus lines
- Buses
- Community settings
- Job sites

So, once again, why did I choose the words that I did for this presentation's title? First, they best fit the audience and the focus of the conference. Secondly, I believe that the management of paraeducators in inclusive rural classrooms presents the greatest of all challenges. Supervision and management used to be the responsibility of the special educator working along side of the paraeducator (Blessing, 1967, Boomer, 1980, Greer, 1979). Inclusive placements could be considered "remote" (Likins and Morgan, 1999) and paraeducators spend most their time apart from special education teachers in general education classrooms (Snell and Janney, 2000). Supervision and management by "remote control" certainly adds challenges.

Who knows "remote" better than rural special education? It's part of the charm of rural special education. The history of paraeducator use, less frequent student and general education teacher contact by certified teachers and therapists, students with special needs working within the general education classroom, and teacher shortages are characteristics of rural special education. Paraeducators have been indispensable to rural special education programs and effective program delivery – insuring that no child is left behind. I believe rural education can provide guidance in the current issues of paraeducator supervision and management.

Actually, the use and management of paraeducators in ANY setting involves many of the same basic issues. Three of those basic issues include identifying who paraeducators are, what they do and why management and supervision is so important. The research of Nancy French at the University of Colorado in Denver provides a generalized profile of a typical paraeducator of any area – rural, urban and suburban. Paraeducators:

- Are usually women
- Have little to no specific training as a paraeducator
- Are, on the average, 40 years old
- Are paid on an hourly basis
- Live in the school's neighborhood
- Are racially, culturally, & linguistically similar to the school's student population
- Started careers as paraeducators while raising their own children
- Are satisfied with their jobs
- Are proud of what they do
- Vary in qualities of experience, education level, training, and knowledge of special education

Generally, paraeducators serve as supports to or as extensions of certified staff responsible for programs and students. They support the needs and the achievements of students. Specifically, they perform tasks and everyday duties associated with their general support role.

I've asked paraeducators what they do. A sample of the responses I've received include:

- Reading aloud to students
- Monitoring student behaviors
- Making flashcards
- Checking papers
- Taking attendance
- Cleaning out and organizing notebooks with students
- Listening to students read aloud

- Taking a students on a "cool down" walk
- Watering the plants in the classroom
- Feeding a student who cannot feed herself
- Helping a student learn "the ropes" on his community job site

Paraeducators need supervision and management because, quite simply, it's the law. The special education law (IDEA-97) specifies that states may allow paraeducators and assistants who are appropriately trained and supervised can assist in providing special education and related services to students with disabilities ("Give Paraeducator Tools", 2000). Providing supervision and management is also ethical.

If we truly want no child left behind, we have to support the paraeducators through appropriate supervision and management. Rural education has the lead in the use of paraeducators, in my opinion, and should provide the lead in the management of paraeducators, where other may be merely "supervising".

When asked, 300 paraeducators in Olathe, Kansas and 150 in Dodge City, Kansas told me they would rather be "managed" than "supervised". The choice of "management" was deliberate in the title of this presentation. Those paraeducators in Kansas convinced me that the difference was important to the relationship between paraeducators and the teachers and therapists working with them. Other words for "supervise" are:

- Oversee
- Control
- Watch over
- Keep an eye on
- Run
- Order
- Govern
- Be in command of
- Rule

Other words for "manage" are:

- Handle
- Direct
- Show the way
- Guide
- Lead
- Put on the right track
- Point in the right direction
- Steer
- Channel
- Funnel
- Pilot

Subtle difference may exist between the words, but a world of difference may exist in the perceptions of the paraeducators. With that thought in mind, let's now look at some specific suggestions and tools to aid in the effective management of paraeducators in rural inclusive classrooms.

Assign one certified staff or administrator as the official manager. Inclusive settings pose the problem of multiple "bosses" for paraeducators (Dover, 1996). With the number of possible instructional and supervisory environments in which paraeducators may find themselves, they will also have to report to or take direction from a group of "bosses". Those "bosses" could be general education teachers, special program teachers, related service staff, administrators, coordinators, lunchroom supervisors, and bus drivers. The greater the number of "bosses", the greater the number of rules, regulations, communication styles, instructional styles, personalities, quirks, personal likes/dislikes, and classroom and area expectations. Each "boss" should be considered an immediate manager – providing support and direction when working directly with the paraeducator. Having numerous immediate managers can be overwhelming, confusing, and even, frustrating at times. One official

manager, usually a special educator, can provide consistent support to the paraeducator and all the immediate managers. Duties of an official manager include:

- General orientation
- Development or revision of schedules
- Providing the names of target students
- Access to help target student information regarding present level of performance, modifications and needs
- General or overall job tasks, roles and responsibilities ("marching orders")
- Approving or developing in-service programs and training
- Ongoing support
- Evaluation of job performance

The duties of an immediate supervisor include:

- Specific orientation to classroom rules, expectations, and procedures
- Specific times which support from the paraeducator is needed
- Identification of non-identified students who may need extra support
- Providing information about subject, curriculum, classroom procedures, instruction & access to materials
- Defining specific job tasks as related to student & instructional activities or classroom needs
- Suggesting areas of needed skill development for the paraeducator
- Providing "on the job" skill training
- Providing feedback on task performance

If the paraeducator does not serve multiple settings or teachers/therapists, but works with only one, that one teacher or therapist is most likely to take on the duties of both the official and immediate supervisor.

Set perimeters for the paraeducator's role and responsibilities. Part of management responsibilities is to ensure the paraeducator does not perform tasks or take on responsibilities that belong to certified staff. Fewer than half of the individual state departments of education had standard or guidelines for the employment, roles and duties, placement, supervision and training of paraeducators ("Standards, Guidelines Not Available", 2000). Ethical practices, as well as legal guidelines in a few states, indicate paraeducators may:

- Be left alone in the classroom in a planned way
- Work with students out of the direct supervision, but under the indirect supervision of a certified teacher or therapist
- Work with student on concepts or skills introduced by a teacher or therapist
- Have specific instructional or management responsibilities with students
- Be involved with student meetings
- Be used to support inclusive placements

Paraeducators should not:

- Be used in place of a certified teacher or therapist
- Introduce completely new concepts or skills to students
- Be given primary responsibility for students with special needs
- Participate in meetings in place of a teacher or therapist
- Be given primary responsibility for the inclusion of one or more students

Perimeters for modifications require special consideration. Paraeducators can make instructional modifications, but should only assist with the construction and the implementation of curricular modifications. Defining curricular modifications is the responsibility of certified staff and student planning teams.

Define duties and assign specific tasks to paraeducators. Key to planning for effective paraeducator management is assigning specific tasks and communicating those expectations. Assigned duties and tasks should be communicated in writing and related to the individual and group instructional needs of target students. Several planning and record sheets are provided.

Empower general education teachers by explaining their role as immediate supervisor and assigning specific management tasks. It is also important that the questions and concerns of general education teachers be considered and addressed. They may have general questions about the assignment of a paraeducator to their classroom. Explain the duties they are expected to perform, as well as those performed by the official supervisor, and finally, those duties you will both perform or on which you will collaborate. Provide basic and useful suggestions and information regarding the management of paraeducators. Examples of management tasks performed or shared by general education teachers include:

- Introducing the paraeducator to the class
- Providing information about the general curriculum
- Providing books, worksheets and instructional materials
- Providing lesson plans, or at least unit topics and lesson topics
- Providing on-the-job training
- Correcting inaccurate instruction by the paraeducator
- Regulating the level of help a paraeducator provides to a student
- Dealing with problems and concerns

Monitor paraeducator performance of duties and provide constructive feedback. Part of ongoing communication with paraeducators involves watching what paraeducators do, listening to what they say and providing feedback that increase paraeducator performance. The Paraeducator Duty Feedback Checklist is provided as a tool to monitor paraeducator performance on instructional tasks including responding to student needs, rapport with students, enforcement of school, classroom rules & routines, is punctual and/or has consistent attendance and fosters student independence. General education teachers, special educators and paraeducators, can use this communication tool themselves.

Meet with paraeducators regularly. One of the most important factors in successful inclusive programs is collaboration time. One of the greatest barriers to successful collaboration is finding the time. A little collaborative time goes a long way if procedures are used, such as the use of an agenda. An agenda is especially useful if you need to meet with more than one paraeducator. Make a commitment to carving out 5 to 10 minutes either during student instructional time (such as independent seat work or group activity time) or away from student instructional time. Remember, often paraeducators come when the students come and may not receive pay for time before or after school. Get creative finding time together. It is amazing what a difference even a few minutes of collaborative time can make.

Consider the roles and task assignments of paraeducators during student planning. As IEP teams, collaborative planning teams and even individual teachers develop individual student programs or plan classroom instruction, plan for paraeducator involvement with students. This allows a proactive approach to both student instruction and paraeducator support.

Rural teachers and therapists may have more experience in dealing with challenging issues in the delivery of special education services. Managing and supervising the instructional support of paraeducators is now part of the job.

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At Risk

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CREATING CLASSROOMS IN RURAL SETTINGS THAT PREVENT DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

Abstract

Teachers across rural America daily face classrooms with increasing numbers of students who exhibit problems, characterized by high rates of inattention, hyperactivity, defiance and noncompliance. Problems are escalating at younger ages and prevalence rates indicate that 7% to 20% of preschool children meet the diagnostic criteria for oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) or conduct disorder (CD). Not only are these children a management problem but they often need academic assistance in learning to read and with language delays (Bryan, 1991; Kavale & Forness, 1998). According to the U. S. Department of Education's 2000 annual report to Congress, approximately 1% of the school population has been labeled Emotionally and Behaviorally Disturbed (EBD).

Teachers need to manage young aggressive and noncompliant children because of these behaviors remain in place over time there is a risk of antisocial behavior in adolescence. Early behavior problems are identified as a predictor of later drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, violence and school dropout (Kazdin, 1995). Unfortunately, the rise in zero tolerance policies for antisocial behavior increases the likelihood that such problems do not receive services and even fewer receive research-supported interventions (Kazdin & Kendall, 1998).

To be successful in school, children must develop academic and social competence. The majority of children vulnerable to school failure are referred to a child study team because of chronic achievement and/or behavioral problems. Children are most often referred when they have persistent reading problems, disruptive or aggressive behavior, or both (Lloyd, Kauffman, Landrum & Roe, 1991). When this referral is made, it signals that a teacher has reached the limit of his or her tolerance with respect to individual differences. No longer does the teacher feel optimistic or confident about their ability to manage the child's behavior or to provide effective instruction within the context of the larger group.

Classroom instruction and discipline are enhanced when a teacher pays close attention to the multiple elements involved in the classroom. Teaching the core curriculum is a legal requirement. To not teach the requisite content areas (reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies and science) is illegal. To omit instruction actually serves to further handicap children with EBD. If instructional goals and objectives which typically address affective and sociobehavioral domains are attained, and the students have not simultaneously been provided access to the core curriculum, how can these children possibly be successful?

Today there is recognition that schools and teachers must address a full range of student behavior, teaching expectations and routines to all pupils, and respond with positive interventions. Positive behavior support is being implemented in hundreds of schools throughout the United States. It provides a context for identifying and serving students in general education so there is no loss of instructional time. Two decades of research (LaVigna & Donnellan, 1986) has shown that if we look at behavior as functional communications then students can be taught adaptive behaviors to serve the same function. The cornerstones of positive behavior support are functional behavioral assessments (FBA) of problem behavior and positive behavioral intervention planning.

The 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA '97) mandates that individualized education plan (IEP) teams use the FBA and positive behavior intervention planning process for all students with disabilities whose behavior provokes consideration of a change in educational placement. Public concerns regarding school safety have prompted schools to think proactively and one outcome of this thinking is the concept of positive behavior support has been broaden to an approach that may be applied to entire schools.

Educators have begun to think about schools as communities and of improving the capacity of the school setting to support the use of effective practices. Effective communities include policies, structures and routines that

promote the use of research based practices. It has been demonstrated that the application of strategies that promote positive behavior support across the total school community. Accordingly, teachers have had to think in terms of providing positive behavior across the entire range of student behavior. This has been elaborated into school-wide integrated systems of intervention, which emphasize multiple levels of prevention (Sugai & Horner, 1999).

As Sugai and Horner (1999) explain, positive behavior support consists of four interrelated systems: school-wide procedures to define, teach, reward and correct pupil social behavior; specific setting procedures to address problems that arise from scheduling, monitoring and architectural flaws; classroom procedures that teachers use in their own classrooms to maintain order and motivation; and, individual student procedures to provide extra resources and structures to support and control the 5-7% of students who typically present 50% or more of the behavior challenges in the school. Obviously, since school-wide planning is essential prerequisite to developing interventions it has been shown that 80% of school staff must be committed to the process. Generally, the process involves a meeting of the entire school staff, including office workers, administrators, custodians, cafeteria workers and bus drivers, as well as teaching faculty. A School Climate Team is formed and given the responsibility of assessing the school environment. The assessment includes an examination of the physical environment to identify where behavior problems occur; routines and schedules that comprise specific contexts in which problems are more likely to happen; how students are monitored throughout the school; and existing disciplinary responses and their effects (Lewis-Palmer, Sugai & Larson, 1999).

The team presents the results of their assessment to the staff and leads them through the process of developing a plan based on the assessment data. Specific components of these plans vary from school to school but typically include: establishing a set of clear behavioral expectations for students in all school areas and activities; identifying strategies for teaching those expectations to students and rewarding them for complying; planning alterations in physical settings and routines; establishing provisions to ensure that students are monitored at all times; and making decisions about how rule violations are to be dealt. Schools that have worked through these implementation criteria have experienced substantial reduction in discipline referral rates, when appropriately implemented approximately 90% of students respond positively (Nelson, Martella & Galand, 1998).

Significant reductions in discipline referrals with the 90% allow the staff to concentrate on the needs of the other 10% with whom the universal interventions are not effective. Students in this group can be considered at-risk and without the proper support, they may experience academic failure and develop enduring patterns of antisocial behavior. These students who often develop disruptive behavior disorders have distinct profiles, which typically include four or more of the following characteristics: academic problems; low academic motivation; problems in peer relationships; associations with deviant peers, aggression, attention problems, hyperactivity, and family difficulties (Farmer, Farmer & Gut, 1999).

Target interventions may be designed for individual students or small groups having similar needs. Important elements include functional assessments of problem behavior; identification, instruction and reinforcement of desired replacement behavior; effective direct instruction of both academic and social skills; learning strategies; and systematic plans for responding to behavior. For individual students a behavior intervention plan (BIP) is developed from the functional assessment. Skills are identified that can serve as replacement behaviors, and these are taught, prompted, and reinforced. Data must be collected to monitor the target and replacement behaviors and decisions are made that govern when the BIP will need to be revised or replaced. Criteria for an effective BIP include clearly written, so everyone involved understands; implemented as written; evaluate the plan regularly and systematically against data decision rules; and revise as often as needed (Scott & Nelson, 1999).

The goal of positive behavior support is to create a community that facilitates and supports student behavior. There are three levels of positive behavior support, universal interventions (school and classroom), targeted interventions (specialized group and individual), and intensive interventions (individual, comprehensive, interagency). Universal interventions are preventative in nature, implemented across all staff and students, collect and monitor school-wide data and predict when and where problems may occur. The school team will do an analysis of physical school arrangements that assesses logistical and architectural factors to minimize the potential for disruptive or dangerous behavior. This assessment provides information critical to setting physical boundaries to keep students in areas that can be monitored, arranging schedules to avoid potential conflicts, and directing student traffic to minimize student numbers in limited areas.

Each teacher will develop a clear set of rules for their classroom. These rules are shared with all faculty and staff and must be both agreeable and enforceable. Staff generate a common list of rules to facilitate safe learning environments. Be sure rules are brief, positive, aimed at the problem areas and publicly posted. All school staff teach the rules to the students through modeling, practice and correction. Staff reinforce students for positive behavior and following the rules.

Staff organize and plan for supervision of all students in all areas where they may congregate. Everyone assumes responsibility for students during transition times and in common areas. Even out of bounds areas for students must be monitored. All staff take responsibility for monitoring students. Supervision is active and engaged with teachers moving about and interacting with students. Procedures are established to facilitate quick assistance when needed and requested.

A plan for the consequences of misbehavior must be determined in advance. This plan must align with district and state policies and guidelines. Discipline should be used to prevent further misbehavior and keep students in school. Consequences, whether positive or negative, are applied immediately. Consistency is critical and consequences must be applied by all staff and across all students. Accurate records and data of disciplinary actions are kept and analyzed to track repeat off offenses and offenders.

Targeted interventions for specialized individuals and small groups are characterized by written individualized plans; used on students for whom universal interventions have not been successful; based on functional assessment; involve effective instruction; and carried out at home and school. Teachers must focus on effective instruction in both academic and social skills. After completion of a functional behavioral assessment to determine specific problems, functional replacement behaviors are taught and supported. These targeted interventions require a thorough knowledge of effective systems of behavior management (Wheeler, 1999).

A Behavior intervention plan (BIP) must be written. This plan identifies the function of the behavior of the student and appropriate replacement behaviors. A BIP must provide for systematic teaching of the appropriate replacement behaviors; arrangement of the environment to facilitate success, prompting and reinforcement; include a specially designed behavior management component; written behavioral objectives; and a mechanism to collect and evaluate data on a consistent basis.

When target interventions are not successful, intensive individual that are comprehensive and often include an interagency component are written. These plans are written and designed to be carried out across a range of settings requiring multiagency planning and cooperation. These plans are based on needs within and beyond the school and provide wraparound services for students.

Careful planning for involvement of community resources is required. In-depth and continuous assessment from a variety of sources and perspectives is required for these students. These students may require criminal justice, social services or mental health specialists to be involved in planning and assessment in addition to school staff. As needed or when necessary, activities will be formally written into IEPs. Teachers must have a thorough knowledge of and ability to access a full range of school and community support services with the school acting as a liaison for the planning of wraparound services. Wraparound services are used with individual students; based on unique child and family needs; built upon child, family and provider needs; use traditional and nontraditional interventions; encompass multiple life domains, school, home and community; resources are blended; services are planned, implemented and evaluated by a team; team supports child, family and service providers; and readily changeable if it isn't working.

To change problem behavior, to teach students and their caregivers to use new and better skills, schools must systematically implement strategies to ensure that these skills are generalized and maintained in multiple settings (Rutherford & Nelson, 1988). The concepts and strategies presented are beginning to be widespread in many of our rural settings. There successful implementation depends on continuing support of administrators and policy makers.

Rural teachers can feel powerless and isolated, especially when beginning a system of positive behavior support. Developing teacher mentor networks is one strategy. Many teachers indicate that having access to an

experienced mentor as one of the most important contributors to job satisfaction (Conderman & Stephens, 2000; McCaffrey, 2000; Whitaker, 2000). Other important supports are released time for guided observations of experienced teachers; technology access facilitating communication; regular sessions that allow for sharing and support; continuing professional development; and encouraging reflective practice (Boyer & Gillespie, 2000).

Schools are being challenged to meet increasingly higher standards of student achievement, to create safe and effective learning environments, and to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. In addressing this challenge, teachers are collaborating with other professionals, parents and community representatives in developing innovative and effective strategies for supporting students. The discipline regulations of IDEA '97 are forcing educators to view students with behavioral problems differently, make systematic changes in interventions, and service delivery (Wheeler, 1996).

To function effectively, teachers need support systems. The foundation of effective instruction and behavioral interventions for students with or at-risk for EBD is a system of school-wide positive behavior support, which addresses the full range of student behavior. Ultimately, the success of interventions will depend on the ability to bridge professional and political boundaries. Teachers must accept responsibility for designing strategies for students that provide meaningful experiences to ensure that skills acquired in educational settings are retained and used to facilitate lifelong patterns of success.

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EMPOWERING CHILDREN TO CHANGE

Elementary Options, a behavior support program for students K-5 with emotional and/or behavioral difficulties, was created to address the unique needs present in our rural setting. Jefferson County School District #251 is located in southeast Idaho and serves 4,000 students, half of which are in elementary school. The goal of our program is to work with staff members within each school to help at-risk students acquire skills that will help them to function in school with greater success.

Unlike many programs, *Elementary Options* does not impose curriculum or dictate classroom strategies, nor does it bear the entire responsibility for improving the functioning of the child. Rather, it functions as a resource. It offers a systematic approach to managing problem behaviors that capitalizes on the strategic use of existing school personnel. *Elementary Options* works in conjunction with the Department of Health and Welfare to provide these services.

Why Implement a Behavior Intervention Program at the Elementary Level?

When determining the need for an elementary behavior intervention program, several ideas were presented:

1. We have some severe behavior problems in our elementary schools and few resources to provide effective intervention.
2. Early intervention at the elementary level is important in the prevention of problems at the junior high and high school levels.
3. Children need behavioral supports delivered in a consistent manner by well-trained staff to be able to change their behaviors.
4. It is advantageous to the district to provide effective, behavioral intervention than to assume the costs for residential placement for even one child with emotional and behavioral difficulties.

When our district implemented a student data management system (SASI is the program we use), and the State of Idaho asked for yearly reporting of data regarding student behavior, it became readily apparent that an increasing number of students at the elementary level had behavioral difficulties. Data showed us that a small number of students were responsible for a large number of the disciplinary incidents. Statistically, about 2% of our student population were responsible for 30% of the disciplinary incidents. According to the "Kids Count Statistics," 30% of the children born in our county from 1994 to 1996 are at educational risk; and these children are now school age. Because of these statistics combined with principal reports, teacher frustration, and parental concerns, the need for a behavioral treatment program became imperative.

Starting the *Elementary Options* Program

In the spring of 2000 it became increasingly evident that an effective program to change the behavior of challenging students was needed in our district. Three questions that needed to be answered were identified, including:

1. What are the key elements of an effective, elementary behavior program?
2. What resources will be needed to start a program?

3. Are there funding sources available?

To identify the elements of an effective program we visited other day treatment programs in our area and met in small group planning sessions. The strongest factor identified was the need for personnel who were ready, willing, and able to work with children demonstrating challenging behaviors. The second factor we identified as critical was keeping students in their "home" classroom for at least part of the school day. Several area programs that used a full day, "pullout" model for behavior intervention found it difficult to reintegrate the students into the regular classroom because their teachers did not want them to come back. In addition, students in a full-day, pullout model had few opportunities to practice appropriate behavior in a typical classroom environment.

Resources needed were initially identified as a teacher, an aide, materials, and a classroom. Costs were estimated at $40,000 for a teacher; $5,000 for a part-time aide, and $1,000 for materials. The district would provide the classroom at an elementary school located midway through the district, as well as, the busing needed to bring students to the *Elementary Options* classroom for part of a day. Costs we underestimated included training costs for personnel, mileage costs for the teacher to visit students in their "home" classrooms and to attend meetings for students in the referral process, additional material and supply costs, and equipment costs such as a computer for the classroom. We did, however, begin the program with $46,000 and very successfully got it off the ground.

Funding sources proved to be the most difficult part. Our school district has one of the lowest tax bases in a state that is already considered by many to "underfund" education. So, district funding was not a possibility. Health and Welfare funded several day treatment programs in larger districts to the south of us, but initially turned us down for funding. The option remaining was a competitive grant submitted to the state for Safe and Drug Free School (SDFS) funds. Our grant was approved for the full $46,000 for one year of funding. In May, Health and Welfare offered $5,600 to offset the cost of an additional aide.

During the second year of the program funding sources changed and grew. We again applied for and received a competitive SFDS grant with a decreased amount of $39,500. We also applied to Health and Welfare for funding under the Idaho Children's Mental Health Act and received $35,000. With the additional funds we added a stipend to the Elementary Options teacher's salary, paid for a portion of a school social worker's salary, expanded the program to the middle school, and hired an additional aide for the middle school. We also used federal special education (VI-B) funds to purchase materials and pay for training and mileage costs for the children in the program who were identified as children with disabilities.

The secret to success for the *Elementary Options* program is our coordinator/teacher. Without a highly trained, motivated, and exceptional individual, effective day treatment is not possible, no matter how little or great the funding sources. Jayetta Rasmussen is trained and certified in Idaho as a teacher and as a school psychologist. Mrs. Rasmussen uses her many skills and problem solving abilities to help children change their behavior, support teachers in the classroom with difficult students, and meet with Student Assistance Teams to identify and assist students with "budding" behavior difficulties. Of all our resources, she is the greatest.

Elementary Options Design

We designed a five-step plan built on the idea of providing accumulating and escalating levels of support. This approach helped us determine and provide assistance that enabled students with emotional and or behavioral problems to function at 80% compliance 80% of the time. The *Elementary Options* model allowed us to justly hold these students accountable for their behavior by providing support systems that enabled them to function in school in a healthier manner.

Behavior supports extend help from the regular classroom to placement in a half-day alternative classroom. The first four levels of support are delivered in the student's regular school setting. Each level has a specific emphasis and produces a natural flow of information that enables the SAT/IEP to make data based decisions. It distributes and expedites the process of gathering data and thereby simplifies the process of conducting FBAs, designing interventions, writing behavior plans, and analyzing student progress.

The *Elementary Options* model also allows schools to take full advantage of the staff and faculty perks individual to their setting. Faculty and staff perks are powerful resources because they empower the school to

personalize and enrich behavior interventions. Interventions that are personalized to fit the student increase the likelihood that the tide of misbehavior can be reversed. They ignite a flow of positive experiences that helps students rewrite problematic perceptions, construct healthy relationships, and devote more energy toward learning.

Elementary Options Model

Step One

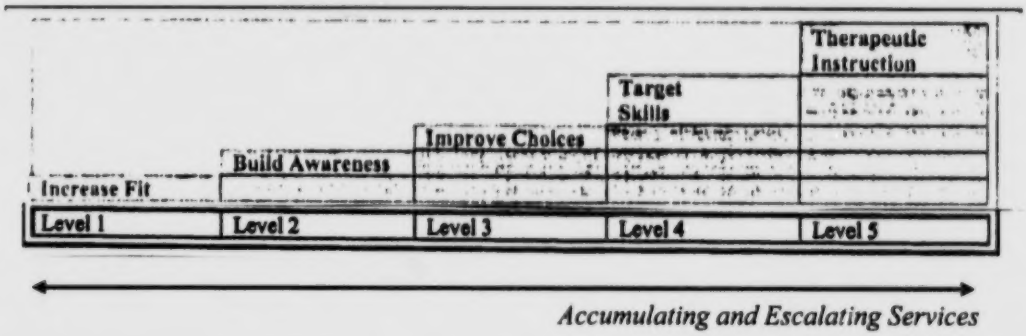
Teacher initiates problem solving by requesting support and submitting observations and data.

Step Two

SAT/IEP gathers additional information and determines appropriate level of service.

Step Three

Intervention and monitoring services begin.



Type of Support
Level 5 - 1/2 Day Placement *Social Skills *Problem solving *Management of Emotions *Academic Enrichment *Behavior Reinforcement *Communicate With Parents/School.
Level 4 - Service Learning *Identify Target Skills *Contract With Principal *Report Performance *Write School Behavior Plan
Level 3 - Coaching & Tracking Sheet *Daily Coaching *Tracking Sheet *School Case Manager Conduct FBA
Level 2 - Counseling Configuration Of: *School Counselor *School Psychologist *School Companion *District Social Worker
Level 1 - Classroom Support *Increase Interaction with Peers *Ensure Academic Fit *Establish Emotional Vents *Class Job

Elementary Options Team Member Roles

One of the strengths of the Elementary Options model is the ability to bring together the expertise and problem solving ability of a diverse group of people in each school. Each member brings information about success and failures in changing a student's behavior and on-going assessment information. Team meetings last from ten minutes to an hour depending on the purpose of the meeting. Team member roles are illustrated below:

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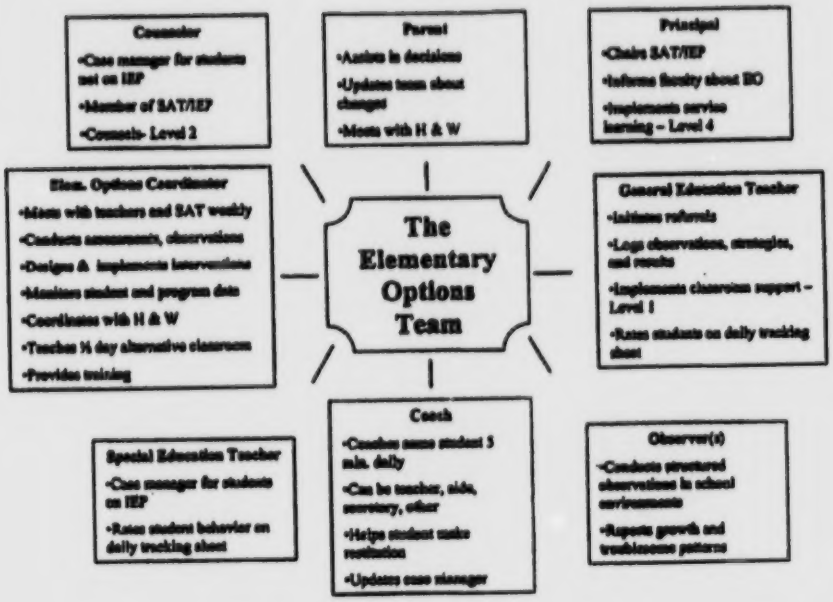
Counselor
•Case manager for students not on IEP
•Member of SAT/IEP
•Counsels- Level 2
Parent
•Assists in decisions
•Updates team about changes
•Meets with H & W
Principal
•Chairs SAT/IEP
•Informs faculty about EO
•Implements service learning – Level 4
Elem. Options Coordinator
•Meets with teachers and SAT weekly
•Conducts assessments, observations
•Designs & implements interventions
•Monitors student and program data
•Coordinates with H & W
•Teaches ½ day alternative classroom
•Provides training
The Elementary Options Team
General Education Teacher
•Initiates referrals
•Logs observations, strategies, and results
•Implements classroom support – Level 1
•Rates students on daily tracking sheet
Special Education Teacher
•Case manager for students on IEP
•Rates student behavior on daily tracking sheet
Coach
•Coaches same student 5 min. daily
•Can be teacher, aide, secretary, other
•Helps student make restitution
•Updates case manager
Observer(s)
•Conducts structured observations in school environments
•Reports growth and troublesome patterns

Program Data

Since September of 2000, 56 students have received emotional and or behavioral support through *Elementary Options*. This includes both students with and without IEPs, as well as, those who do and don't meet the Health and Welfare criteria for emotional disturbance. Data collected during the past year and one-half indicates that our program has had a positive impact on individual students, as well as, at the building level. Program results were determined from regular classroom teacher ratings in three to four areas depending on the level of support a student was receiving. The table below shows numbers of students receiving support on each of the five levels and students who have reduced their need for support by moving to levels of decreasing support.

	New Students 9/2000 - 5/2001	New Students 9/2001 - 12/2001
Level of Support Provided		
Consultation Only	21	8
Levels 1-2	N/A	11
Levels 3-4	N/A	5
Level 5	10	1
Reduction of Support		
Reduction of support by 1 or more levels.	2	7
Full transition from Level 5 alternative placement.	2	2
Partial transition from Level 5 alternative placement	0	4

Students demonstrated a five- percent average monthly increase in their ability to use independent learning behaviors. (Levels 1-5). The average monthly increase in social skills was two percent. (Levels 1-5). Data from students on a daily tracking plan (Levels 3-5) showed an average monthly increase of six percent in their ability to meet their target academic and social behaviors. A record of school discipline incidents for the past year and one-half shows that before students entered the program they averaged 1.60 class three incidents per month. After *Elementary Options* that average dropped to .31 incidents per student per month.

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The Future of the Elementary Options Program

Because of the proven success of *Elementary Options* the desire for the program is secure. Changes have evolved in the program in the delivery of services, funding sources, and the role of the coordinator/teacher. These will continue to evolve as our experience grows in changing children's behavior.

The delivery of services has become stronger in the general education environments and has reinforced our initial practice of keeping students in their regular classrooms for at least part of the school day. Additionally, the continuum of services has expanded to include more steps between initial referral and placement in *Elementary Options*. Maintaining students in general education environments and returning students to full time placement in general education environments is our strongest goal. Building supports in our elementary schools will continue to grow and will most likely include increased training for classroom teachers, better problem solving and interventions at pre-referral meetings, increased school "service" projects for troubled students, and increased use of existing school personnel to act as coaches and mentors for children with behavior difficulties. We expect each of these trends to continue. Also, the future will give us a better ability to intervene with students at an earlier age and stage to avoid behavior patterns that are so ingrained that all of our resources must be marshaled.

Funding sources will continue to be somewhat unstable. We intend to again apply for a SDFS competitive grant with a decreased request, apply for a Health and Welfare contract under the Idaho Children's Mental Health Act with an increased request, and use federal special education (VI-B) funds for aides and materials for those children who have IEPs.

The role of the coordinator/teacher has greatly changed from an emphasis on instruction and treatment for students in a pullout setting, to an emphasis on consultation, problem solving, behavior monitoring, and a liaison with Health and Welfare personnel. The coordinator/teacher will continue to be the success of the program. *Elementary Options* is a program that is essential to the well being of students, teachers, and patrons in Jefferson School District #251.

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FOUR BLOCKS: A LITERACY MODEL FOR DIVERSE, RURAL SCHOOLS

Rural schools are providing service to more diverse populations than in the past. As is typical, there is an inverse relationship between the need for services and the amount of resources available. The population at J.L. Bowler Elementary School in Bunkerville, Nevada has become increasingly at risk; an increase in families living in poverty, an increase in families and children that are non-English speaking, and an increase in the transciency rate of the school population. Literacy is an issue. A literacy program that provided a model for "one stop shopping" needed to be implemented. The criteria for selection of a literacy program was as follows: a. literacy strategies were based on "best practices" and brain research, b. the program could be implemented without access to extensive resources (money and off-site professional development), c. strategies to teach written and oral language needed to be applicable to non-English speaking children and families, and d. utilization of the model must provide support for new teachers and invigorate veteran teachers as well as lend itself to site-based research.

Numerous reading programs were reviewed to determine if scientifically based research on literacy instruction was embedded in instructional strategies. The National Reading Panel Report (April, 2000) released by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, assessed the status of research-based knowledge and the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read. Specific skill strands were identified for phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Other authors have identified the importance of systematic, sequential phonics (Burmeister, 1975, Carnine 1980c), "practice makes perfect" or time spent on practice with oral and silent reading activities (National Reading Panel Report, April 2000), and the benefit of before/during/after reading activities (Pressley, 2000).

These best practices were compared with the literature on second language acquisition and the administrator utilized numerous research findings that had implications for classroom instruction. Accepted research indicated that a second language is acquired by using language in meaningful contexts, called "comprehensible input" (Krashen, 1985, Cummins 1981). Chamot and O'Malley (1994) developed the CALLA Handbook: Implementing The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (Addison-Wesley, 1994) which provided guidance on curriculum development and instructional strategies for metacognition, cognitive and social affective strategies for English language learners. Cambournes "Conditions for Learning with Classroom Applications" (Addison-Wesley, 1998) discussed numerous strategies related to literacy for these students. These findings, and other writings, were used to evaluate the Four Blocks framework to see if the literacy based activities and teachers' guides adhered to sound practices and were applicable to non-English speaking students. The consensus was positive and the Four Blocks framework implemented on a voluntary basis in the Fall, 2000.

The Four Blocks provides a framework for instruction that incorporates on a daily basis different approaches to beginning reading. The four "Blocks", Guided Reading, Self-Selected Reading, Writing, and Working with Words, represent four different approaches to teaching children to read (Cunningham, Hall & Defee, 1998). The different literacy levels and reading personalities of children is approached by using a variety of formats to make each block as multilevel as possible, providing additional support for children who struggle and additional challenges for children who catch on quickly (Hall, Prevatte & Cunningham, 1995). While this paper will focus on the Four-Blocks framework for grades one through three, additional Four Blocks literacy programs have been adapted for Kindergarten (Building Blocks) and grades four and five (Big Blocks).

Clark County School District has specific policies, procedures, and standards for curriculum and instruction at each grade level. The selection of Four Blocks also had to meet standards for quality instruction. It's significant to note that Four Blocks does not determine content, rather provides a framework for literacy instruction through which content flows. This was attractive to the administrator and teachers who volunteered to implement Four Blocks, as it meant little change in content, only routine. Aside from teachers' instructional manuals, the primary expense for the implementation of Four Blocks was an investment in leveled readers, as many as the school budget

would allow. This was again an attractive feature as it meant that books were the primary focus, and could be used throughout the school forever, and not just as a part of a specific curriculum.

The implementation of Four Blocks had four stages: a. recruitment of teacher volunteers and implementation, b. job-embedded professional growth and mentoring, c. Refinement of practices, d. dissemination of Four Blocks throughout Clark County School District. A regional expert on Four Blocks was brought in for the initial training during the fall of 2000. That provided the springboard for recruitment and implementation. A professional growth class was designed on Four Blocks, specifically for J.L. Bowler faculty, through Clark County School District's professional development department. This course provided teachers the opportunity to collaborate with one another at school, do job embedded research (reading gains of students, etc.), and refine their practices through mentoring, internet communications, and attendance at regional conferences on Four Blocks. Refinement of strategies occurred through video taping of specific lessons, daily communication between teachers, and preparation for district conferences on Four Blocks. J.L. Bowler served as a program model for the district, and over fifteen schools sent administrators and faculty to directly observe in the Four Blocks classrooms and talk with teachers and the administrator. The administrator and Four Blocks faculty were invited to present at four local conferences as well as provide direct in-service training for specific elementary school campuses. This kind of dissemination helped improve knowledge of the programs research base as well as perfect instructional strategies related to the four blocks.

Student assessment via district/state standards based assessment provided initial evidence that Four Blocks was increasing the literacy skills of students. Students enrolled in second grade provided the most consistent assessment data. Data indicates an increase in Reading, Math, and Writing for the past two years that are slightly above the district average in all three content areas. The increase in Reading from an average of 76.48 in 1999-2000 to 84.93 in 2000-2001 is most compelling. During these two years it is important to note that enrollment remained steady at the school and in second grade, but the at-risk indicators of poverty, non-English speaking students, and transciency continued to increase.

During the current school year, 2001-2002, several changes have been made based on faculty input and student achievement. All teachers, grades K-3 will implement the Four Blocks framework, with experienced teachers on campus providing in-class expertise. Veteran Four Blocks teachers also provide the neophytes with an opportunity to visit each of the four blocks in action throughout the school day. This type of mentoring should alleviate the majority of concerns for teachers coming on board. An additional assessment piece has been put into place to determine the effectiveness of Four Blocks. All students in grade K through 3 will be assessed using the Johns Basic Reading Inventory. Students will be given the "Johns" in the fall and as a post- test in the spring to determine reading gains. This will give the school an independent measure of literacy improvement and provide an additional source of data on curriculum strengths and weaknesses. Throughout the school in all grades and classrooms, the first fifty minutes of the instructional day are dedicated to literacy skills. The intent is to provide an extra fifty minutes per day for reading, on top of the 120+ minutes of literacy training provided through the Four Blocks framework.

Data from the current school year should allow the school to disaggregate data and determine literacy gains for non-English speaking students. To date, the school and/or district has not been able to do so due to changes in state/district standards based assessments. Again, second grade will be the flagship for data collection due to the consistency of the assessment instrument. Faculty remain enthusiastic about the Four Blocks programs, and numerous sources of external funds have been investigated to continue to provide professional growth for faculty and parents, and develop an extensive collection of leveled/chapter books and reading materials for students. As a rural school, serving as a model demonstration site for a large urban district has provided an additional source of pride and recognition for the highly professional faculty and staff. This type of positive visibility, as well as gains in student achievement, indicate the educational environment of J.L. Bowler continues to improve and excel.

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VOCATIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

The Neodesha Building Trades Program provides special education and at risk students with the opportunity to learn while they earn and invest in the future of the community.

The City of Neodesha was looking for ways to solve an age old problem of a shortage of housing. The city commission offered $125,000 to an entity that would assist with solving the housing shortage. The president of the Neodesha Educational Foundation stepped forward to accept the funds and indicated that the Neodesha High School Building Trades Program would contract with the foundation to build a house per year.

The extension of this program to build houses and provide funding through the foundation provided the program with the opportunity to work year round. The year-round program now provides summer jobs for the instructors and many of the students.

Students in this program receive incentive pay for their work during the school year along with high school credit. This incentive pay is generated through the program billing customers for work completed by the students. When a project is bid, the students and instructors compute how much the project will cost for materials. Labor for the students is computed at approximately $2.00 per hour.

This incentive pay is given to the students once per quarter. The students are usually encouraged to purchase materials for their homes and family with the funds. The pay is distributed in such a way as to account for the effort of the individual students. For example, a student who did not show up for the class would not receive the same pay as the regular, hard working student.

Students are required to participate in all of the job functions associated with constructing a house with the exception of floor coverings. The students dig the foundation, pour the foundation, construct walls, hang sheet rock, and all other functions including heating, electrical, plumbing and sewer work.

To date students in the program have constructed five single-family homes. The homes have all been three bedrooms with an attached garage. They have been between 1,100 and 1,600 square feet. The students are able to construct these homes for approximately $56.00 per square foot.

New home construction is one of the most important economic indicators in the country. This program provides special education and at risk students with knowledge and skills that they

can use right after high school to gain employment in a good paying industry. They can continue to use these skills and build a career.

The Neodesha Building Trades Program provides special education and at risk students with the opportunity to learn while they earn and invest in the future of the community.

A partnership has been formed between Neodesha High School, the Neodesha Education Foundation and other interested businesses and industries to improve the community, its facilities and its appearance. The program has been in operation for the past nine years and positively affected nearly 200 young men and women.

The program is restricted in terms of enrollment to students at Neodesha High School who have been identified for special education or are severely at risk for dropping out of school. Most of the students are in the 11th or 12th grade, but some have come from the 9th and 10th grades. Regular, non-at-risk students are not eligible to participate.

At its beginning this program focused on teaching students vocational skills in the field as they constructed sheds, poured concrete driveways and patios, and other small projects. Beginning in 1996 the program began to look for larger projects and took on the task of constructing its first single family dwelling. This home of approximately 2,000 square feet was constructed for an individual family in Neodesha. The students constructed the home from the ground up, completing every job function except the laying of floor coverings.

Around the same time the Neodesha Education Foundation was incorporated principally to assist in the initiation of a paid student apprenticeship program. This program provides students with the opportunity to learn on the job site, earn high school credit and receive wages for their work.

Collaborative Education Models

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COLLABORATIVE TEAM BUILDING FROM A DISTANCE

Introduction

The importance of developing collaborative relationships to connect educators has been recognized for years. With the growth of alternative methods of instructional delivery via the Internet, collaborating from a distance has increased the capability of educators to network in new ways. Collaborative teams are solving problems and developing new relationships that emphasize the importance of partnerships. Today students are learning how to collaborate in courses taught through Web-based or Web-assisted instruction at a number of colleges and universities.

Collaboration, a necessary skill utilized in online classrooms, is viewed in some courses as a built-in challenge for students. Teams collaboratively evaluate case studies to solve problems, then post answers to a discussion board that is archived for easy retrieval. Further class interaction is encouraged through the use of "hot topic" discussions with optional completion synchronously or asynchronously. School systems have formed partnerships to provide encouragement to teachers and to share best practices online. Traditional ways of collaborating have given way to innovative practices utilizing technologically advanced methodologies. Collaborating, cooperating, and problem solving has taken on new meaning for educators, requiring a major paradigm shift.

Collaborating from a Distance

Collaboration through traditional face-to-face methods and via distance techniques share many common components such as: cooperative planning, cooperative teaching, effective interpersonal communication, selection of curriculum goals, individualization of instruction, modification of assessment, arrangement of the teaching environment, and management of students (Gately & Gately, 2001). Add to this list the need for teachers to incorporate technology into the curriculum and the task seems overwhelming even if the lesson is presented via traditional methods of delivery. Unexpectedly, nontraditional methods of instructional delivery have proven to be of assistance to teachers as well as students in a number of ways.

Planning Cooperatively.

The main barrier to successful cooperative planning in face-to-face classrooms is related to the identification of specific times to work together (Karge, McClure, & Patton, 1995). Although time will always be limited for busy teachers, planning from a distance can improve efficiency and eliminate most scheduling problems: A chat or discussion can occur at any hour from the safety of home. The following tips identified for face-to-face meetings still apply for online cooperative planning: meet at a regular time, prepare a list of ideas, use questioning techniques to guide thinking processes, identify which teaching strategies to utilize, divide the work equally, develop an evaluation plan, and keep a record of the issues discussed (Hawbaker, Balong, Buckwalter, and Runyon, 2001).

Cooperating to Teaching.

In cooperative teaching environments, teachers work together to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of a select group of students. Teachers involved in collaborative partnerships have reported increased feelings of

worth, renewal, and creativity (Friend & Cook, 1992). Teachers working closely together move through the following developmental stages in the coteaching process: careful communication, compromising communication, and collaborative interaction (Gately & Gately, 2001). One of the unique advantages of collaborative coteaching through distance delivery of instruction is the rapid movement of the instructors and the students from the careful communication stage to collaborative interaction stage. It has been reported that in the beginning stages of coteaching, "invisible walls" appear to separate teachers as well as students, whereas with online instruction the walls disappear since there are no physical classrooms or limits placed on planning schedules (Gately & Gately, 2001). New levels of communication can be established and classes can interact as they have never been able to do so before.

Cooperative teachers, even those located at a distant location, can now participate with students in discussions by utilizing a discussion board or by utilizing virtual chat rooms. Guest speakers can be invited to share their expertise in the area of collaboration with the students. All students can be required to post a question to the speaker on the discussion board and then respond to his or her answer. Guests and students from neighboring states or other countries can enjoy rich, collaborative discussions.

Students can interact with the instructor on an individual basis through the use of e-mail messages, electronic transmission of documents, posting to a discussion board, sending a fax, making a telephone call, or planning a face-to-face meeting. Student interaction can be accomplished by assigning students to the group of their choice for the purpose of chats, document transfers, and e-mails. Members of different teams can become an invaluable source of information during the course. An archive of all group interaction can be made available for instructional records and for access by students who have missed the scheduled event.

Encouraging Interpersonal Communication.

Interaction among students occurs spontaneously with online presentation due to the speed and efficiency of communication. Facilitating instruction through the use of a discussion board or chat room as a class assignment and later for professional collaboration provides the framework for establishing life-long, collaborative relationships within the educational community. Relationships develop that are unlike any experienced face-to-face: Administrators and teachers complete assignments and solve problems collaboratively as interpersonal relationships strengthen (Young, 2000).

Establishing Curriculum Goals.

Although course goals may mirror the traditional classroom, instructional strategies, curriculum design, and methods of presenting materials may differ significantly with distance education. Goals established in one school system may be adopted in another through collaboration from a distance. Through the use of multiple learning environments utilizing new technologies traditional lectures become a thing of the past. Lesson plans naturally integrate technology into the curriculum and provide hands-on experience for the students. Curriculum is restructured by "chunking" materials for clear presentation and easy access (Porter, 1997). Online textbooks, reading assignments, and research activities are utilized and updated frequently to provide students with current information.

Individualizing Instruction.

Building interpersonal relationships unique to individual needs, as Young (2000) suggests, is unavoidable with courses delivered online (Young, 2000). Frequent e-mail messages between the instructor and the student help establish a close relationship not enjoyed with traditional course presentation. Assignment options in the form of lesson modules or individual lessons provide choices to students that are not available in a traditional classroom. Asynchronous completion of course work allows students the flexibility to work at their own pace. Multiple instructional formats, grade managers that display grades immediately and frequent updates keep students informed about their progress.

Modifying Assessment Procedures.

Assessment procedures should include an individual analysis, demonstration of the capability to make an oral presentation, documentation of writing skills, and opportunities to observe interaction in field experiences.

Alternative, online assessments can be developed to provide students with options that suit their unique needs. PowerPoint presentations, to replace oral demonstrations, can be uploaded at course sites for viewing by all students. Real field experiences in school systems can be arranged to provide students with on-the-job training in collaborative team building. Electronic field trips can be arranged to visit schools that are modeling best practices.

Arranging the Teaching Environment.

With face-to-face teaching, the instructor must manipulate the environment to meet individual student needs. But all too often the constraints of a physical classroom do not allow for quiet study areas or for creative learning activities. Whereas, in the virtual environment students create their own learning space and travel anywhere to conduct their research. The environment expands beyond the physical classroom to create endless possibilities for experimentation and collaboration.

Managing Students.

Management issues can be a significant challenge to teachers of traditional and nontraditional students. How to increase student participation, create a stimulating learning environment, and focus on important information are of serious concern to any teacher. Fortunately, through online instruction interaction between the teacher and the student can become a daily activity. Students no longer have a specific time of week to meet with the teacher, but spontaneous interaction occurs through e-mail, live virtual chats, and group assignments. The learning environment becomes the location of choice for the student, whether that may be the comfort and safety of home or the efficiency of the local library. Study guides and other online activities can be posted for access by students at their convenience.

Developing Technical Expertise.

Capitalizing on the delivery capabilities of the Internet allows for the expansion of the market beyond the traditional student population. Universities with shrinking numbers are expanding their markets to include students from around the world. One example is The University of Phoenix Online which offers more than 100 courses and two degree programs with an enrollment of over 1,700 students (Meyen, Lian, & Tangen, 1998). The development of strong technical skills is viewed as a natural bi-product of this method of instruction. Collaboration among technical assistants, instructors, and students is a must to ensure networking that is barrier free.

Porter (1997) states that both educators and trainers must receive the necessary educational support, including specific training, for any distance learning program to be successful. These challenges provide a unique opportunity for dedicated teacher educators to design courses that overcome the barriers of distance, provide technical support services to students, and ensure delivery of quality education to administrators, general educators, and special educators serving the needs of students everywhere.

Extending the School House

News forms of organization are required for collaborative opportunities via distance education to be successful. Cooperative efforts among colleges and universities to provide alternative delivery of instruction have been difficult to establish, therefore only a few successful partnerships exist. Waiting to define the issues and develop the policies could lead to failure, therefore universities are forging ahead to offer courses via the Internet. Although the move to online instruction has yet to be fully accepted, student attitudes will be the determining factor in the paradigm shift. The advantages in the area of collaboration are many, the least of which is the almost unlimited interaction with classmates at any time and almost anywhere (Meyen, Lian, & Tangen, 1998). The school house will be extended to include nontraditional students who would otherwise not attend certain courses offered face-to-face.

Meeting Educational Standards

As educational standards increase, it has become more difficult to hire and retain teachers forcing some school districts to consider alternative delivery of instruction. According to an opinion article in Pantagraph, The Illinois Virtual School has met the supple-demand problem by providing the option of online learning. The lab

school at Illinois State University has taken the lead in developing high school courses to meet the state's learning standards. Teachers not only develop some courses but also attend classes for professional development credit. The courses provide many delivery options and allow students to learn at their own pace. Collaborative interaction among students from different schools has strengthened academic programs and increased student numbers.

Looking at Research

Students taught by two of the presenters learned how to collaborate in four courses that were modified for web-based or web-assisted instruction in an exceptional education program. Collaboration, a necessary skill utilized in inclusive classrooms across the state, was viewed as a built-in challenge for students. In the introductory course to exceptional education, teams evaluated case studies and posted their answers to a discussion board. Class interaction was encouraged through the use of "hot topic" discussions with optional completion synchronously or asynchronously.

The collaboration course met face-to-face for eight sessions of instruction on not only how to build collaborative teams, but also for technical training from a privately employed expert. During these sessions a "technology expert" was identified in each group to provide follow-up instruction to team members. A positive self-image was encouraged by employing the "you are your brother's keeper" attitude: Students must assist each other with technological challenges. Additional help, whenever needed, was also provided by the instructor. Students were assigned to groups according to geographical locations across the state. Meetings were often held in schools or home communities, but some meetings occurred in a virtual classroom utilizing synchronous chats. Group reports were written and posted to a discussion board or sent to the instructor via electronic transmission. Desktop conferencing eliminated face-to-face meetings when further clarification was needed.

The introduction to exceptional education was taught totally online, with most material presented asynchronously. The design of the course, unrelated content in each chapter, allowed students the flexibility of completing lessons in order of presentation or out of order. Whenever possible, each student decided on which team to join. Teams were encouraged to work together on several course assignments, a revolutionary concept to many students. Posting a question response to replace a chat was permitted to accommodate time constraints, and then chat archives were accessed by students at a more convenient time. All students were encouraged to design a Home Page, a feature of the web-based courseware, to share information about their unique teaching experiences.

Two of the presenters prepared for presentation of two exceptional education courses collaboratively via interactive television and Web-based delivery of instruction for one semester. The courses met on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning for four weekends, delivering instruction to forty-one students at ten sites across the state. Both instructors prepared a portion of the lesson for each night. The first two sessions were devoted to providing technical training to all the students as well as an introduction to exceptional education. All materials were modified and then posted online utilizing WebCT, the Web-based courseware provided by the university.

An entrance survey revealed that since most of the students had never taken a course via interactive television or via the Internet, they had some apprehensions about the technological challenges. Students were presented with the option of participating in group activities via the internet on selected weekends. Collaborative activities were planned to encourage group interact across the state, providing opportunities to share challenging situations and solve difficult problems. A guest speaker posted information to a discussion board and students collaborated in teams to respond to questions posed to them. In the event of inclement weather, the two instructors shared interactive television time at the university site instead of commuting and then students completed lesson modules online asynchronously. Materials were designed in modules containing lessons, study guides, formats, case studies, and assignment schedules so information could be "chunked" as suggested by Porter (1997) for successful online presentation to students. Assignments were sent to the instructor electronically, creating a paperless classroom (Foreman, 2000).

Course statistical data and exit surveys created by the instructors revealed that most of the students enjoyed the convenience of the alternative instructional delivery. It was reported that eliminating travel provided more time for family interaction. Nontraditional students, especially those with children, voiced the strongest support for development of more courses for online instructional delivery. Two courses have enjoyed full enrollment during each instructional delivery session, with waiting lists for course entry. Although a few students missed the face-to-

face interaction enjoyed in traditional classrooms, the flexibility of working at your own pace outweighed this disadvantage. Two students working in the same school district talked and worked together on class activities. One student stated that interaction was not that much different online than during courses conducted via interactive television. Students reported that travel time saved while taking the course online was spent on activities with family members, especially children. Being able to work on class assignments during the evenings or late at night when children were asleep was mentioned as a big advantage of online course presentation. One student stated that instructor feedback and collaborative interaction occurred more often than in face-to-face classes.

Conclusion

Collaboration, cooperation, and problem solving are seamless components of the online teaching environment, if and when appropriate planning and creative curriculum modifications are implemented. Professors can prepare lessons in a barrier free environment and universities can operate efficiently and economically as technological advances are accepted and appropriately utilized. Standards can be maintained through cooperative efforts to capitalize on each institutions strengths and creating partnerships to provide quality education to all students.

Research conducted by the presenters in the area of online course presentation indicated that technological advances have allowed students to develop excellent collaborative skills. Analysis of statistical data and exit surveys created by the instructors revealed that almost all the students enjoyed the online collaborative experience. Working collaboratively in groups taught participants how to interact in real world settings. All students improved their technological skills while experiencing, as one student reported, "a whole new level of communication". Three years of teaching the online courses provided convincing evidence that distance education can be successful and providing instruction on how to build collaborative teams was a natural bi-product.

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INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT OF PARAEDUCATORS IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS: THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE TEACHERS

Recent professional literature indicates the dramatic increase in number of paraeducators used to support special needs students in inclusive placements (Demchak and Morgan, 1998; Vergun and Chambers, 1995). The rationale for appropriate supervision and management of paraeducators is well documented (French, 1998; Giangreco, et al., 1997; Pickett and Gerlach, 1997). Federal special education guidelines call for assurance that paraeducators are adequately supervised while supporting students with disabilities (French, 1998). A review of current and past literature points, however, to issues and concerns regarding paraeducator supervision, the lack of preparation of special education personnel and general classroom teachers for supervision (Ashbaker and Morgan, 1999; Demcek and Morgan, 1998; Friend and Cook, 2000; Salzberg and Morgan, 1995). The manner in which paraeducators have been supervised in the past is not necessarily effective in inclusive settings (Friend and Cook, 2000; Likins and Morgan, 1999; Mueller, 1995; Pickett and Gerlach, 1997).

Inclusive settings pose unique challenges for the appropriate management and supervision of special education paraeducators (Friend and Cook, 2000; Likins and Morgan, 1999; Mueller, 1995), including a lack of role clarification, communication problems (Mueller, 1995) and "remote" placement of paraeducators away from the direct supervision of special educators (Likins and Morgan, 1999).

This session reported the results of a research project examining the specific instructional management practices of general education teachers and special education teachers and therapists who work with paraeducators. The study focused on the actual and ideal performance of specified supervisory tasks as perceived by 369 general education and special education teachers and therapists from Kansas. The teachers and therapists surveyed were purposefully selected based on their actual experiences working with paraeducators in inclusive settings. Kansas serves a large rural school population and has provided special education services to rural students through special education cooperatives (Kirmer, et al., 1984) and paraeducator support. The survey participants were general education teachers and special educators from 12 school districts within two eastern Kansas special education cooperatives. Eleven of those school districts are considered rural school districts.

The survey results are useful to general education teachers, special education teachers and therapist, and administrators responsible for assuring appropriate supervision of paraeducators by creating a picture of current practices and preferred ideal supervisory and management practices.

Paraeducators are increasingly being used around the country to support the broad range of special education services to students (Friend and Cook, 2000; Giangreco, et al., 1997). Schools and special education cooperatives in Kansas have long utilized paraeducators to support the programs of students with special needs. Gathering and applying the perceptions of Kansas teachers with experience working with paraeducators will provide vital information regarding appropriate management tasks and effective collaboration. Such information will help to ensure that no child receiving instructional support from a paraeducator is left behind.

Methods and Procedures

A survey developed specifically for this study was used to collect the opinions and perceptions of grades P-12 educators with experience working with, supporting, or supervising paraeducators. Perceptions and opinions regarding actual and ideal performance of instructional management tasks associated with the placement and use of special education paraeducators in general education or "inclusive" classrooms were sought from general education classroom teachers and special educators. Special educators included special education teachers and related service therapists.

Study Sample

Key-informant and "snowball" sampling, types of purposive sampling, was used. Oliver (1997) describes "snowball" sampling as a process of asking key-informants to name other people who may have specialist knowledge to establish a chain of "experts". Because of geographic and special education service delivery homogeneity and established use of special education paraeducators, two Special Education Cooperatives were chosen as study sites. Special education teachers and therapists and general education teachers within the two Cooperative service areas would provide the study's survey respondents.

Development of the Survey Instrument

The survey instrument, Managing Paraeducators in the General Classroom: A Survey for Teachers and Other Certified Staff, was developed for use in this study. Using the paraeducator instructional management and supervisory skills defined and discussed in the existing literature, specific management and supervisory tasks were identified. The final study survey instrument included 27 specific tasks associated with the instructional management and supervision of paraeducators in inclusive classrooms.

Survey Process

Two procedures for survey distribution and collection were defined based on the preferences of the participating special education cooperative. One procedure involved the use of special educators to distribute and collect surveys from general education teachers within their individual school or educational placements. The second procedure involved whole group, on-site survey administration to school and district staffs. Participation in this study was voluntary. No names were attached to the surveys.

Survey respondents were asked to consider each task twice – once to consider who, in their opinion, actually performed the task and a second time to consider, which ideally should perform the task. Response choices offered on the survey included general education teacher (GenEd), special education teacher or therapist (SpEd), Both, Other, or Don't Know.

A total of 1270 surveys were distributed through both procedures. Results of both distribution procedures yielded 383 returned surveys. Of the 383 returned, 369 surveys were used in the study's analyses.

Methods of Data Analysis

Research questions No. 1 and No. 2 were answered through descriptive analysis and examination of frequency data generated for each of the 27 tasks.

To answer Research Question No. 3, survey responses of general education teachers and special educators were compared for significant differences using a Chi-square test for independence. Responses with job titles of "other" and those with no answer were not used.

A contingency table was created for each task twice – once for the "actual" responses and a second time for "ideal" responses. The desired level of significance for this study was $\alpha = .05$. To compensate for the repeated testing of the variable, Bonferroni's adjustment technique was used to define the alpha level of significance at or below .002 ($\alpha <= .05/26 <= .002$). If the relationship between the job title and survey responses were found to be significant, Cramer's V (Cramer's Phi) was used to estimate the strength of that relationship. The Chi-square showed a relationship and the Cramer's V showed the practical significance of that relationship.

The same techniques were used to answer Research Question No. 4. This question compared the response choices of building level assignment, indication of in-service or preservice preparation to work with paraeducators, years of educational experience, and years of experience working with paraeducators. The level of significance for these comparisons was $\alpha <= .002$.

Research question No. 5 utilized the chi-square goodness-of-fit test to compare the percentage split between the actual and ideal responses of general education teachers and special educators. The percentage levels of

"actual" responses were used as the expected value and the "ideal" percentages as the observed value. The level of significance for these comparisons was $\alpha <= .002$.

Results

Respondent Demographics

Job Title - Of the 369 respondents, about 57% indicated job titles of general education teachers, 39% indicated special educator or related services therapists, 5% indicated "other" and .3% did not indicate a job title.

Building Level Assignment - Of the total respondents, about 39% indicated elementary, 30% indicated middle school, 20% indicated high school, and 4% indicated a preschool assignment.

Experience in Education - Responses for all ranged from 1 to 50 years of experience with an overall mean of 14.7. General education teachers had a mean of about 15 years (M=15.2) experience and the special educators had slightly less than 14 years (M=13.9) experience. The largest group of special educators had between 1 and 5 years of teaching experience, while the largest group of general education teachers had between 6 and 10 years of teaching experience.

Experience with Paraeducators - Responses for all ranged from 1 to 26 years of experience with an overall mean of 8.6. General education teachers had an average of almost 8 years (M=7.8) experience working with paraeducators. The special educators indicated an average of more than 9 years (M=9.3).

Specific Preparation for Working with Paraeducators - About 26% of all respondents indicated they had received preparation. About 72% indicated no preparation. Special Educators indicated a higher percentage of preparation (about 40%) than general education teachers (about 16%). Respondents assigned to elementary schools indicated the smallest percentage of preparation (about 19%).

Results of the Research Questions

Research Question 1. Who was perceived to be performing specific paraeducator instructional management tasks in inclusive classrooms? According to the percentages indicated by the survey responses, general education teachers, special educators, or both perform the tasks in almost all cases. The percentages reported as "Other" and "Don't Know" or those surveys with no responses indicated were negligible. Handout Table 1 provides a summary of paraeducator management tasks perceived to be actually performed by general education teachers, special educators or both according to survey responses of 50% or more.

Five tasks did not yield one response choice with a percentage of 50% or more. Those tasks were evaluating the paraeducator's overall job performance, clarifying instructions, tasks, or duties, regulating the level of help provided to a student, providing supplemental materials and supplies, and monitoring the paraeducator's day-to-day classroom activities.

Research Question 2. Ideally, who should be performing specific paraeducator instructional management tasks in inclusive classrooms? According to the respondents, the general education teacher, the special educator or both, should be performing the tasks in almost all cases. Again, the percentages reported as "Other" and "Don't Know" or "No Answer" was negligible. Handout Table 1 provides a summary of ideal paraeducator management tasks performance for general education teachers, special educators or both according to survey responses of 50% or more.

Five tasks did not yield one response choice with a percentage of 50% or more. Those tasks were providing classroom rules and student behavior expectations providing classroom schedules and procedures, providing lesson topics and unit topics assisting in the assignment of the paraeducator, and providing a written job description.

Research Question No. 3. Do general education teachers and special educators differ in their perceptions of the actual and ideal performance of paraeducator instructional management tasks? There were significant differences noted in 18 of the 27 "actual" task performance responses among general education teachers and special educators. The effect size (Cramer's V) of those 18 tasks ranged from .470 to .196. The Cramer's V statistic of .100 can be labeled as "small" and the statistic of .500 can be labeled as "large" (Aron and Aron, 1997).

Significant differences were noted in 12 of the 18 "ideal" task performance responses among general education teachers and special educators. The effect size of those 12 tasks ranged from .309 to .189.

Research Question No. 4. Was there a significant relationship between the opinions and perceptions of ideal task performance of the survey participants and the other demographic variables? Significant differences were noted in 7 of the 27 "ideal" task performance responses among the perceptions of respondents assigned to elementary, middle, or high schools. The demographic variables of specific preservice or inservice preparation, years of educational experience, and years of experience working with paraeducators did not significantly impact the "ideal" answers of the survey respondents, according to the study's analysis.

Research Question No. 5. Does a discrepancy exist between opinions and perceptions of actual task performance and ideal task performance? According to the survey respondents, the "ideal" task performance for 25 of the 27 tasks differed significantly from the "actual" task performance. Significant differences were not noted for the tasks of providing classroom schedules and procedures, and providing books, worksheets or other instructional materials.

Summary of Results

The Respondents had Experience Working with Paraeducators - Overall, the General Education teachers had almost eight years experience and the Special Educators had over nine years experience working with paraeducators. The length of classroom experience with paraeducators lends to the credibility of the study's findings.

The Majority of Respondents did not have Preservice or Inservice Training for Working with Paraeducators - Overall, only slightly more than one-fourth of the respondents indicated any specific preparation while slightly less than three-fourths indicated no preparation. These figures are comparable to findings in other studies by French (2001) and Morgan (1997). There is no indication as to the quality or specifics of the preparation or whether the preparation included any training in the supervision and management of paraeducators in an instructional setting.

Actual and Ideal Task Performance Differed Significantly - This study provides a picture of what is actually happening in some inclusive classrooms and what the respondents thought should be happening regarding the management of paraeducators. As reported by the survey respondents, general education teachers and special educator are performing about the same number of management tasks as well as sharing the responsibility for other tasks. In an ideal situation, the respondents indicated that the overwhelming majority of the tasks should be performed or shared by both the general education teacher and the special educator. In this study sample, what is actually happening in the classrooms does not match what the respondents perceived as ideal.

The Ideal Task Performance Indicates a Shift from Individual to Shared Responsibilities - When closely examining the differences between the actual and ideal responses, all 27 tasks showed an increase in the percentage of respondents indicating "Both" when comparing the actual and ideal performance. Both general and special education teachers indicated ideal practices of sharing the responsibilities of paraeducator management and supervision.

The clear indication of an ideal practice of shared responsibility in a majority of the tasks is both surprising and encouraging. French, (1999) stated that when faced with changing roles, special educators tend to keep tasks they have traditionally fulfilled or to take more tasks on themselves. The special educators in this study appear willing to either give up or share some tasks. Considering the numerous and diverse instructional tasks and duties of general education teachers, their willingness to share paraeducator management tasks is impressive to this investigator.

General Education Teachers and Special Educators have Different Perceptions About Actual and Ideal Paraeducator Management - Those differences are more pronounced in the actual performance of the tasks than in the ideal performance perceived by the respondents. Fourteen of the 18 tasks had a medium to large practical difference. The strength of those differences may indicate that general education teachers and special educators do not have the same understanding of who is actually performing those tasks. General education teachers and special educators who "share" the services or the use of paraeducators should have a higher level of agreement if they are effectively communicating and collaborating about the paraeducator. These results may point to a lack of collaboration and communication.

On a more positive note, "ideal" selections showed fewer significant difference. Their level of agreement is higher and their differences not as strong. According to the study's participants, both should perform the vast majority of the management tasks.

Ideal Responses were Impacted by the Teachers' Building Level Assignments - The assignment of the teachers to elementary, middle or high schools significantly impacted the responses of ideal task performance in 7 of the 27 tasks. For each of those tasks, a comparison of the percentages for the three levels revealed information useful in the paraeducator program development and on-going support at different building levels. This information may be particularly important for those general education teachers and special educators who serve in multiple buildings or have multi-level assignments.

Conclusions

If, in a traditional sense, the supervision or management of paraeducators is considered an administrator duty, it was not indicated in this study. The survey respondents did not "shy away" from management and supervisory tasks by assigning ideal task performance to others. Their responses could be interpreted as with a willingness to share in or a desire for increased input into the responsibilities associated with effective paraeducator use in their inclusive classrooms.

The following recommendations may help collaborating teams of general and special educators move toward the ideal performance of paraeducator management and supervisory tasks.

Recommendations

According to the results of this study, shared responsibility of paraeducator management and supervisory tasks was perceived as the ideal in most tasks. If general education teachers and special educators are willing to share a great number of management responsibilities, they deserve administrative support at the district and school levels. They also deserve to be adequately trained and prepared. Recommendations resulting from this study include high priority topics for collaboration and consultation, short-term strategies to increase paraeducator support through instructional management, and long-term strategies aimed at moving actual instructional management practices closer to the ideal.

1. Districts and schools should develop guidelines & practices regarding paraeducator management and supervision
2. Districts and schools should encourage and increase opportunities for collaboration between general and special education staff
3. Issues of management and supervision need to be seen as a priority to collaborating teachers and IEP/student planning teams
4. Paraeducator management and supervision topics should be included in preservice course content and curricula
5. Paraeducator management and supervisory topics should be included in school/district inservice and staff development programs
6. Increase the expectations for special educators to inform general educators of paraeducator management responsibilities

7. All those who work with paraeducators should be reminded and encouraged to maintain ongoing communication and feedback
8. Collaborating teams should ask and answer 14 questions (Handout) providing immediate support and management to paraeducators working in inclusive classrooms.
9. Collaborating teachers and planning teams should better define paraeducator roles, responsibilities and task assignments
10. Individual and shared teacher management tasks should be specifically defined
11. Teachers should develop written plans for observing and recording paraeducator performance
12. Teachers should be encouraged and trained to provide on-the-job training
13. Paraeducators should attend school workdays and inservice programs to increase teacher contact time and planning opportunities.

Further Study

Since only the perceptions of general education teachers and special educators were compared in this study, the perceptions of other key personnel should be sought for examination and comparison.

This study did not involve classroom observations or collection of evidence (i.e., copies of paraeducator schedules, written job descriptions, collaborative team agendas). Further investigation with this same population or a similar population should include classroom and meeting observations, collection of evidence, and interviews. The collection of observational data could provide a picture of paraeducator supervision and management that is not based on perceptions, but based on actual performance of management and supervisory tasks. The collection of observational and interview data would also provide insights into techniques or "how" tasks are addressed. The study population would not necessarily involve this study's population, but could use other schools and districts using special education paraeducators in inclusive classrooms.

Another area of further study should involved the use of interviews or focus groups to determine barriers and challenges preventing ideal task performance, solutions to barriers and challenges, necessary administrative supports, and successful strategies, techniques and best practices regarding management and supervision of paraeducators in inclusive settings.

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Actual and Ideal Performance of Tasks Associated with Special Education Paraeducators in General Education Classes (Assigned by Response Percentages of 50% or Higher)

Actual Task Performance	Ideal Task Performance
General Education Teachers	**General Education Teachers**
• Introducing the para to the class	• Introducing the para to the class
• Providing classroom rules/behavior expectations	
• Providing classroom schedules and procedures	
• Providing lesson plans	
• Providing lesson topics and unit topics	
• Providing information about the general Curriculum	• Providing information about the general curriculum
Special Education Teachers	**Special Education Teachers**
• Developing the paraeducator's schedule	
• Providing IEP information	• Providing IEP information
• Providing info about areas of disability	• Providing info about areas of disability
• Providing info about confidentiality	• Providing info about confidentiality
• Assisting in hiring the paraeducator	• Assisting in hiring the paraeducator
• Assisting in the assignment of the para	
• Providing a written job description	
• Providing on-the-job training	
• Determining the para's training needs	
Both	**Both**
• Providing books, worksheets, and instructional materials	• Developing the para's schedule
	• Providing books, worksheets, and instructional materials
	• Providing lesson plans
	• Providing supplemental materials/supplies
• Providing ongoing communication	• Providing ongoing communication
	• Providing on-the-job training
• Directing instructional activities of the para	• Directing instructional activities of the para
• Providing support/instruction in modifications	• Providing support/instruction in modifications
• Assigning specific tasks	• Assigning specific tasks
• Correcting inaccurate instruction by the para	• Correcting inaccurate instruction by the para
• Providing feedback on classroom perform.	• Providing feedback on classroom perform
	• Monitoring the day-to-day activities
	• Clarifying instructions, tasks and duties
	• Regulating the level of help to a student
	• Determine the para's training needs
	• Evaluating the para's overall job performance

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LET'S WORK TOGETHER

Provisions for an appropriate education for children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment continue to challenge rural schools. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 stipulate that students be removed from general education programs only when the nature or severity of their disability is such that education in general education classrooms, even with the use of supplementary services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily 20 USC 1412 (a)(5). More than 75 % of the over 6 million 6-21 year old children and youth currently identified as having disabilities in the United States are being taught in general education settings at least 40% of their school day. Another 20% are enrolled in these settings less then 40% of their school day (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

The percentage of children with disabilities attending general education classes has increased every year since the inception of The Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) in 1975, and by all indications, this trend will continue. Figure 1 displays the national data which provide a selected overview of the number of children receiving special education services in the general education classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

Figure 1
Number of Children Age 6-21 Served by Educational Setting
Outside Regular Class

≤ 21%	21 – 60 %	≥ 60%
2,494,209	1,560,287	1,096,364

Although inclusion calls for a "shared ownership" approach to educational problems of students with identified needs through a partnership between general and special education, it makes increasing demands on general educators to assume responsibility for the learning of students with disabilities and students at-risk. It requires an effective support system, which may not be in place in many educational settings. For special educators, inclusion requires skills in effectively interacting with other professionals and sharing responsibility for students once considered "theirs." For general educators, it requires active participation in developing and implementing programs for students with disabilities and an increased willingness to open their traditionally private classrooms to special educators. Inclusion, therefore, creates a need for communication, coordination and collaboration among a total school staff which has access to materials and methods to enable them to implement responsible inclusion. Professional skills to promote the development of mutual respect and support, for establishing a collaborative and sharing atmosphere, and facilitating a team approach to instruction and planning have been identified as professional development needs (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 2002).

The use of communication skills is a critical component of collaboration and is one of the most important keys to a implementing successful inclusion program. In fact, communication is often viewed as the cornerstone of collaboration (Pugach & Johnson, 1995). The ability to effectively communication with colleagues and parents is crucial during collaborative educational programming and problem solving situations. Facilitation of such requires the use of effective verbal and nonverbal behaviors. This includes behaviors such as gestures, movements, expressions, posture, language, and words, which all simultaneously impact how messages are received.

TEACHER-TO-TEACHER

In order to facilitate teacher–teacher partnerships, teachers must be aware of barriers that may inhibit healthy and productive communication and problem-solving sessions. Some barriers that may interfere with

communication include:

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

- uncomfortable seating arrangements
- unfriendly body language in the form of gestures and posture
- holding an ad hoc meeting, thus not providing the problem with the attention deserved

VERBAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

- use of clichés may serve to downplay the problem presented
- minimization of feelings can make people feel reluctant to share information in the future
- meaningless reflection statements or the overuse of reflection statements
- premature advice/ solutions offered as a quick fix

Whereas nonverbal and verbal communication barriers may inhibit collaborative efforts, the use of effective nonverbal and verbal communication skills promotes the development of collaborative relationships between teachers. To facilitate effective interactions several strategies are suggested to promote effective teacher–teacher partnerships. These include:

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

- arrange non-threatening and inviting proximity seating arrangement
- use friendly body language which includes eye contact and accepting posture
- schedule meeting times to allow for details to be gathered and signify that the problem/concern is important

VERBAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

- use open ended questions to identify the focus of a problem / concern
- delay giving advice until the problem or objective is fully clarified
- use verbal following techniques such as "fill me in"
- use appropriate reflection and clarifying statements

TEACHER AND PARENT INVOLVMENT/COMMUNICATION

Research has shown that parental involvement is beneficial to the child, family and school (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998; Epstein, 1996). "Increasing the involvement of parents in the education of their children is a national goal for policy makers in both general and special education" (Twenty-first Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1999, p.1-1). The reauthorization of the IDEA has significantly increased the role of parents in the education of students with disabilities. "Despite legislative intent, parent involvement may not always reach desired levels, and at times educators and parents may perceive the interests of the child differently, leading to conflict" (21st Annual Report to Congress, 1999, p. I-2).

One common vehicle used to promote parent involvement is the teacher-parent conference. Unfortunately, the teacher-parent conference can offer a challenge to even the most experienced teacher. To minimize miscommunication and maximize parent involvement during the teacher-parent conference, several communication strategies are suggested. Teachers should use plain language and avoid the use of jargon, open the conversation on a friendly note, focus on the strengths of the child, present opportunities for parent input, make concrete suggestions, and end meetings with a plan of action in which each person's responsibilities are restated and detailed.

CONCLUSION

Successful verbal and nonverbal communication often leads to successful collaboration. Research regarding collaborative skills indicates educators engaging in collaborative processes are likely to benefit from a host of skills clustered in several areas that include communication, inter-personal problem-solving, instructional strategies, assessment knowledge and techniques, providing accommodations and modifications for curriculum access.

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SECTION 504: THE OTHER SERVICE OPTION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was implemented by Congress in 1977. For many years, school districts perceived its main obligation as ensuring physical access to public buildings (i.e., ramps were installed, curbs were cut, elevators were added to multi-level buildings, rest-room stalls were enlarged, etc.). At the same time, schools were committed to compliance with special education regulations now referred to as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

With passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Congress required that school districts make their programs and activities accessible and usable to all individuals with disabilities.

Within the last several years, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has become active in assisting school districts in further defining "access." The definition of access means more than physical access; a student may require special accommodations such as modified assignments in order to benefit from their education.

Section 504 is the part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that applies to persons with disabilities. Section 504 is a civil rights act that protects the civil and constitutional rights of persons with disabilities.

Section 504 states that no qualified person with a disability can be excluded from or denied the benefits of any program receiving federal financial assistance.

Section 504 and special education are two separate services. All school districts should have a Section 504 Coordinator to answer questions about Section 504.

HOW DOES SECTION 504 DEFINE "APPROPRIATE EDUCATION"?

A free appropriate education is one provided by the public elementary or secondary school that includes general or special education and related aids and services that (1) are designed to meet the individual educational needs of a person with a disability as adequately as the needs of a non-disabled person are met and (2) are based upon adherence to evaluation, placement, and procedural safeguard requirements.

HOW DOES SECTION 504 DEFINE "DISABILITY"?

Section 504 is the part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that protects persons from discrimination based upon their disability status. A student is disabled within the definition of Section 504 if he or she:

- Has a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities,
- The impairment impacts the child's educational program.

"Major life activities" include functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. When a condition does not substantially limit a major life activity, the individual does not qualify under Section 504.

In order to determine eligibility for Section 504 services, your child must be evaluated by a team of individuals who are familiar with your child. The results will be shared at a team meeting in which you are involved.

HOW ARE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IDENTIFIED?

Section 504 regulations cover a larger group of students with disabilities. The definition of disability under Section 504 includes students who have a physical or mental disability that substantially limits one or more of life's major activities.

School staff should consider the potential existence of disabilities and possible Section 504 protection for students diagnosed as having asthma, HIV, Tourette's syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), heart malfunctions, communicable diseases, urinary conditions, blood disorders, chronic fatigue syndrome, school phobia, respiratory conditions, blood/sugar disorders, post traumatic disorders, epilepsy, cancer, birth defects, Tuberculosis, etc.

DOES SECTION 504 REQUIRE EVALUATIONS?

Section 504 requires that a school evaluate "any child who, because of a disability, needs or is believed to need special education of related services." An evaluation is also required prior to any significant change in placement. Most evaluations under Section 504 only involve gathering testing that has already been conducted, such as medical records. The evaluation data should be reviewed to determine if it is current or needs to be updated.

ELIGIBILITY

If the school and/or parent has reason to believe that, because of a disability as defined under Section 504, a student needs accommodations or services in order to participate in the school program, the school must evaluate the student. If it is determined that a student is disabled under Section 504, the school must develop and implement the delivery of all needed services and/or accommodations.

SERVICES

The determination of what services and/or accommodations are needed must be made by a group of persons knowledgeable about the student. This usually involves the school principal, classroom teacher(s), and other educators working with your child. The parent and student must be included in the process whenever possible. The group must review the nature of the disability and how it affects the student's education. The decisions about Section 504 eligibility and services must be documented in the student's file and reviewed periodically.

An appropriate education for students eligible under Section 504 may consist of education in general classes with accommodations and programs designed to meet the unique needs of a particular student.

Adjustments in academic requirements and expectations may be necessary to accommodate the the needs of the child with disabilities to enable him/her to participate in the general education program.

It is important to keep in mind that some students who have physical or mental conditions that limit their ability to access and participate in the education program are entitled to rights under Section 504, even though they may not fall into a disabilities category covered under special education.

WHAT DOES MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS MEAN?

Accommodations are adjustments made by the classroom teacher(s) and other school staff to help students benefit from their educational program. In some cases, a plan should be developed outlining services and accommodations.

Examples of common accommodations include the following:

- Adapt assignments and tests.
- Provide an extra set of textbooks for home.
- Use study guides, and organizing tools.
- Provide a peer tutor/helper.

- School counseling.
- Have the student use an organizer.
- Preferential seating.
- Modify recess/PE/transportation.

Accommodations need to take into account both the functional limitations of the individual and the alternative methods of performing tasks or activities to participate without jeopardizing outcomes.

- Accommodations must be individualized.
- The individual needs of the student with a disability should be met to the same extent as the needs of students without disabilities.
- Accommodations should place the student with a disability at an equal starting level with the non-disabled student.

The following is an example of a student who is eligible for Section 504 services and possible accommodations provided by the school.

> A student has been diagnosed as having asthma. The doctor has advised the student not to participate in physical activity outdoors. The disability limits the major life activity of breathing. The school is required to make accommodations that allow the child to benefit from their educational program.

Possible accommodations include the following:

- Modified activity level for recess, P.E., etc.
- Use of air purifier or inhalants.
- Avoidance of allergens.
- Inhalant therapy assistance.
- Medication administration.
- Policy adjustment for personal administration of medications.
- Access to water, gum, etc.
- Curriculum considerations (science class, PE, etc.).
- Develop health care and emergency plan.

The school should develop a written plan describing accommodations and services. Decisions must be based upon evaluation information and student needs. The decisions must be made by a group of persons knowledgeable about the child; the meaning of the evaluation data, and about appropriate accommodation(s).

WHAT ARE THE SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER SECTION 504?

There has been much confusion over the years regarding the relationship between Section 504 and special education laws and regulations. It must be emphasized that Section 504 falls under the management responsibility of the general education program.

The school staff and parents need to work in collaboration to help guarantee that the student is provided with the necessary accommodations and services.

To be in compliance with Section 504, schools must do the following:

1. Provide written assurance of nondiscrimination.
2. Designate a 504 Coordinator.
3. Provide notice of nondiscrimination in admission or access to its programs or activities.
4. Annually identify and locate all qualified children with disabilities who are not receiving a public education.
5. Implement a grievance procedure to resolve issues of discrimination.
6. Annually notify persons with disabilities and their parents or guardians of the district's responsibilities under Section 504.

7. Provide parents or guardians with procedural safeguards.
8. Conduct a self-evaluation of school district policies, programs, and practices to make sure discrimination is not occurring.

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS?

- Share concerns with the school early before problems get out of hand.
- Be involved in Section 504 meetings concerning their child.
- Assist in developing appropriate accommodations for their child.
- Encouraging their child to cooperate with school staff and do their best.
- When appropriate, collaborate with other agencies such as vocational rehabilitation.
- Use mediation or the grievance procedures as options if a difference cannot be resolved with the school.

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS?

1. When appropriate, be involved at Section 504 meetings.
2. Before graduating from high school, be familiar with Section 504/ADA rights at post-secondary programs.
3. Cooperate and put forth maximum effort at school.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SECTION 504 COORDINATOR?

The role of the Section 504 Coordinator is to assist the school in meeting requirements under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The Coordinator will provide resources and help educators and administrators regarding their responsibilities under Section 504. In addition, the Coordinator will assist in creating an on-going program that will support problem-solving teams in accommodating students' needs.

WHAT ARE SOME DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SPECIAL EDUCATION AND SECTION 504?

	Section 504	*Special Education*
Type	A civil rights act	An education act
Funding	Local funding	State-federal-local funding
Administration	Section 504 Coordinator	Special Education Director
Service Tool	Accommodations or services	Individualized education program (IEP)
Disabilities	All disabilities, if eligible	13 federal disabilities
Parents	Should be involved in all team meetings	Should be involved in all team meetings
Procedural Safeguards	Notice of consent of parents is required	Parent consent and notice required for initial evaluation and placement
Evaluation and Eligibility	An evaluation is necessary before it can be determined if a child is eligible for Section 504 services	An evaluation is necessary before it can be determined if a child is eligible for special education

WHAT ARE THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS?

The U.S. Department of Education is the agency of the U.S. Government that administers federal funds for education programs, conducts and disseminates education research, focuses national attention on issues and problems in education, enforces federal statutes prohibiting discrimination in any activities receiving federal funds, and ensures equal access to education for every individual.

The U.S. Department of Education maintains regional civil rights offices to enforce Section 504 and other civil rights laws. All parents have the right to directly contact the Office for Civil Rights if they believe their child is being discriminated against based upon their disability. Most differences with schools can be resolved before contacting the Office for Civil Rights. It is suggested you follow the procedures outlined below:

1. First try to resolve your differences at the teacher or school level. Set up a meeting to discuss your concerns.
2. If unsuccessful, set up a meeting with the school's Section 504 Coordinator.
3. If unsuccessful, call the local parent advocacy group.
4. If unsuccessful, ask for mediation. This is a free service for parents. A neutral individual will work with you and the school to help resolve your differences.
5. If unsuccessful, ask the Section 504 Coordinator how to file a grievance.
6. File a complaint with the regional office for Civil Rights.

OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINT PROCESS

An individual person or an organization may file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the U.S. Department of Education. An OCR complaint must be files, in writing, within 180 days after the violation has occurred.

Anyone wishing to file a formal complaint with OCR should submit in writing the following information in a letter or on the discrimination complaint form available from the OCR regional office:

- Your name and address (a telephone number where you may be reached during business hours is helpful, but not required).
- A general description of the person(s) or class of persons injured by the alleged discriminatory act(s) (names of the injured person(s) are not required).
- The name and location of the institute that committed the alleged discriminatory act(s).
- A description of the alleged discriminatory act(s) in sufficient detail to enable OCR to understand what occurred, when it occurred, and the basis for the alleged discrimination (race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age).

A recipient may not retaliate against any person who has made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation or proceeding under the four statutes listed above.

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SPECIAL EDUCATORS AS CONSULTANTS: RURAL - URBAN COMPARISONS ACROSS TEN YEARS

Introduction

The inclusion model of serving students with special needs has developed the role of the special education teacher to include consultant and collaborator with general educators, administrators, and families. Although a thorough understanding of what works for special education consultants in rural schools is limited, we have a body of knowledge derived from the literature on rural schools, rural special education, and consulting which suggest that the consulting model is appropriate for providing services for children with disabilities in rural areas. To maximize the effect of this model, the strengths of rural schools and teachers should be recognized and extended. In addition, special barriers and unique challenges for rural special educators as consultants should be recognized and reduced as much as possible. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of special educators as consultants and understanding how these roles and responsibilities have changed over the past decade will provide useful information to teachers, administrators, and teacher preparation programs.

The purpose of this research was to survey special educators about their role of consultants to general educators, administrators, and families. Data were collected from special educators about their consulting/ collaboration roles and responsibilities, frequency and content of consulting episodes, barriers to consulting, and most successful practices. Data were compared the responses of special educators in rural and metropolitan schools. These data were also compared to similar data collected ten years ago, thus presenting a longitudinal perspective on the changing roles and responsibilities of special educators. The researchers present suggestions for the use of the results of this study for schools and teacher preparation institutions.

Need

Too often, generalizations are made about the role of teachers and the preparation of special and general educators. Assumptions are made about the similarity or differences in rural and metropolitan settings. The unique characteristics of rural schools and teachers create advantages and barriers to the indirect service delivery model of consulting for the education of students with special needs.

In the 1970's, consultation became a significant factor in serving students with special needs. By the mid-1980's became one of the most significant trends for special education services. By the 1990's, a new fournal, and Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and Teacher Education Division of CEC (TED) conferences and pre-conference workshops focused on consultation and collaboration skills.

Role delineation and clarification are the starting points for preparing teachers for the role of collaborative school consultation. According to Dettmer, Thurston, and Dyck (2002), the consultation role emanates from need. This reflects the approach that special services are based on student needs, not labels, to determine the service and delivery method, and an array of services is targeted and made available to address those needs. Whatever the delivery method in specific schools and districts, teachers, administrators and parents need to work together to seamlessly meet the needs of special education students. Role clarification within this collaborative effort can cause stress and lead to burnout. Understanding the framework for consultative efforts and having established role expectations maximized the power of the consultation process (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 2002).

More than a decade ago, Thurston and Kimsey (1989) published a study describing the roles and responsibilities of special educators in their roles as consultants. This study also compared the roles and responsibilities of rural versus metropolitan teachers. State and national standards and legislation have lead to substantive changes in the role of special education teachers across the country. Service models, such as inclusion,

that emphasize the consulting and co-teaching role of special educators have also lead to changes for expectations and preparation of special educators. The current study investigated the role and responsibilities of metropolitan and rural special educators in Kansas. These data are compared with the results of the Thurston and Kimsey (1989) of a decade ago.

Method

This study replicated and extended the Thurston, Kimsey (1989) study. Two instruments were used to collect data about the roles and responsibilities of special educators: a log sheet of consulting activities, and a survey about roles and responsibilities and barriers related to consulting and collaboration activities. Both instruments were the ones used in the 1989 study, however, the new survey included several new questions which asked interagency collaboration and parent involvement/home-school collaboration.

Surveys were mailed to a random selection of certified special education teachers teaching in interrelated classrooms in Kansas. A list of those currently teaching was obtained from the state department of education; every fourth name was sent a survey. The majority of the 161 special educators who returned the survey were female (88%), with an average age of 43 years, and reporting an average of more than 8.6 years of experience in education. The population reported elementary certification (32.3%), secondary certification (18.5%), K-12 certification (43.4%), or "other" such as middle school certification (9.5%).

Results

Roles and Responsibilities Survey. A total of 31.7% reported resource room as their current primary service delivery model. Only 6% reported that inclusion was their primary delivery model. Itinerate services were predominant in rural areas. More than half of the teachers reported that their role as a consultant was officially recognized by their administration, and this recognition was 20% more common in metro areas. This number is marginally higher than reported in a similar study over ten years ago. Teachers reported spending about four hours a week consulting and more than two hours a week co-teaching.

Survey data were disaggregated by rural and metro location of schools and were compared to data collected from teachers with a similar instrument over a decade ago. Many of the consultation strategies listed were similar to those listed 10 years ago. Table 1 compares the practices listed by teachers in 1989 and 1999 and are shown for urban and rural separately. Communication and informal strategies seem to be important in consulting for most teachers across time. Other changes reflect differences in the service models prevalent, with inclusion more the model in 1999.

Table 1
Successful Consulting Practices

1989 (N=130)	1999 (N= 161)
Rural	Rural
Active listening	Meetings with teachers and parents
Utilizing teachers as resources to one another	Communication and relationship building
Informal teacher meetings	Providing information and suggestions to teachers
Working as partner with general educator	Informal 1-1 talking
Follow-up after consulting	Written communication and reports
Parent communication	Team meetings
Urban	Urban
Problem solving	Informal 1-1 talking
Team teacher Meetings	Team meetings
Follow-up after consulting	Providing information and suggestions to teachers
Working as partner with general educator	e-mail
Parent communication	Communication and relationship building
Pre-assessment meetings	Meetings with teachers and parents
Modification of IEP's	Phone calls

Problems that interfere with the success of consultation, collaboration, or teamwork among educators are listed by Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck (2002). They list such barriers as difficulty managing time and resources, managing resistance, excessive caseloads, lack of training for consultation, too many "hats", and territoriality of school personnel. These barriers were also among those listed by the teachers in this study. Table 2 represents responses from this study and from the 1989 study. Responses were grouped into categories and all categories with over 5% of responses are listed.

Table 2
Barriers to Effective Consulting

1989 (N=130)	1999 (N=161)
Rural	Rural
Too many other responsibilities 60%	Lack of time 54.8%
Lack of time 35%	Skills and attitudes of gen. ed teachers 35.6%
Lack of administration support 35%	Lack of administrative support 11%
Travel hardships 30%	Too much paperwork 4%
Too much paperwork 25%	Role ambiguity 5.5%
Urban	Urban
Too many other responsibilities 82%	Lack of time 40.4%
Too much paperwork 64%	Skills and attitudes of general ed teachers 29.4%
Parents not interested 27%	Lack of administrative support 5.5%

Changes in barriers to consulting, and consulting strategies have changes over time, although not significantly. Lack of time, too much paperwork, and lack of administrative support seem to be general barriers over time, not matter the setting. A new barrier stated by both urban and rural teachers in 1999 was the skills and attitudes of general educators. This points to the need to reexamine aspects of teacher preparation to assure that all teachers are prepared for the inclusion of students with special needs in their classrooms.

Summary

Over time, rural and urban special educators have more similar barriers and successful practices in common that they did ten years ago. Although models and practices are based on the assignment of the teachers, the building administrator, and the type of inclusion used in the school, common strengths of communication, ideas for interventions and modifications, and strong relationships are important for special educators who serve in today's rural schools.

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THERE'S SNOW ON THE PASS AND THE ITINERATE HAS NO SNOW SHOES

Providing Special Education and Related Services to IEP Eligible Students in Rural Areas

The Reward and the Challenge

The role and responsibilities of being a public school administrator in a rural school district can be very rewarding and challenging. Some of the rewards and challenges are specifically related to the delivery of special education and related services to students with disabilities. This paper will discuss how rural districts can continue to provide special education and related services to students with disabilities even in the event that inclement weather prohibits the itinerates and related service personnel to travel to the rural site. Districts that are most impacted by this situation are those relying on the limited numbers of available traveling itinerates, specialists, and or other related service personnel to provide the services specified in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) to meet the unique needs of the students with disabilities. These impacted districts continue to provide leadership and solutions to rural specific situation; thus the reward of finding solutions to challenges.

National Need

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) in 1999 identified a significant problem related to rural school districts. The AASA reported that there is a shortage of qualified teachers in all subject areas but most noted in the areas of math, science, and special education. With regards to special education, there is even a more dramatic shortage of the disability specific itinerate specialists that typically serve low incidence high needs students. The national shortage includes but not limited to: Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialist, Braille Specialist, Deaf Specialist, Certified Interpreters, Vision Specialist, and Deaf/Blind Specialist. As one example of the dramatic shortage, The National Plan for Training Personnel to Serve Children with Blindness and Low Vision (2000) recommends that a total of 11,700 FTE teachers (both Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and Teachers of the Deaf/Blind (TDB) and the same number of O&M specialist are currently needed. This will require hiring an additional 5,000 FTE teachers of the visually impaired and over 10,000 O&M specialist. While Lewis (2001) commends the National Plan for Transitioning Personnel to Serve Children with Blindness and Low Vision for their recommendation, she states that the issue of preparing 5000 new TVIs and 10,000 O&M specialist is an overwhelming challenge and the need to work collaboratively with State Educational Agencies (SEA) and Local Educational Agencies (LEA) is imperative. The reward of this challenge will be in finding effective solutions to this difficult situation of special education teacher shortages.

The Opportunity and the Challenge of Compliance

On November 29, 1975, President Ford signed into law The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), most readily referred to as Public Law 94-142. This was the first of several acts of legislation related to special education. With almost three decades of history to reflect upon, the current challenges of providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to students with disabilities has been well articulated by many scholars and experts in the field. Maloney (1993), one such expert, provides a most insightful and very concise process specific overview of things for districts and district administrators to be aware of when serving students with disabilities. An attorney by training, Maloney readdresses the fundamental mandates of special education laws and concluded that there were seven common reoccurring errors that may cause school districts challenges. These challenges often times would result in costly due process hearings.

Maloney (1993) gathered and analyzed information related to due process hearings for over ten years. This ten-year review resulted in the publication of a technical assistance resource guide and video: The Seven Deadly Sins: Common Mistakes that Lead to Due Process Hearings (1995). Maloney identified the common mistakes as (1) Procedural Violations, (2) Denying Services Based on Cost Considerations, (3) Rigidity, (4) Giving in to the Parents' Demands, (5) Acting on Basis of Principle vs. Reason, (6) Taking the Law into Your Own Hands, and (7) Procrastinating. These publications may assist school districts and administrators with the technical assistance for comparing, revising or affirming their current special education policy and procedures.

As previously stated, since 1975 and the legislative passage of PL 94-142, other amendments have followed. With each additional amendment the clarity of the legislation is enhanced. With clarity of legislation, resource rich technical assistance publications, experts in the field and the continued dedication by districts to offer services to students with disabilities, it would appear that compliance issues have been resolved. It would also appear that districts may have reached a place in time where legislative compliance with the law may seem mastered, but mastering "mother nature" (inclement weather) may not be within the control of the district. Parents, teachers, students and administrators consistently plan and collaborate with each other to develop and effective and appropriate IEP and strive for each and every IEP to meet the individual needs of the student. With the IEP in place and the IEP team's optimistic view that the IEP can and will be implemented, often times a disruption in service delivery happens due to inclement weather conditions. This disruption may complicate and potentially disrupt the delivery of services needed to appropriately provide services to the student. Being proactive and with pre-planning for this kind of situation can assist in providing a "seamless" service delivery and thus address the student's need and maintain the collaborative IEP team focus. The IEP team members are very valuable. The general education and special education teachers are typically located on the same site and have the opportunity to collaborate on a daily basis.

Itinerate specialist by design only provide services as needed on service specific schedule, that is as identified on the IEP. Whether site based daily or not, the effort for collaboration between all IEP team members is imperative. The differing roles and responsibilities of the IEP team member's collaboration are uniquely paired with compliance and courtesy.

The Compliance and the Courtesy of Collaboration

The compliance of the law is important and the intent of the law is to be a collaborative team. The compliance and the courtesy of collaboration are the function and responsibility of the team. With this in place, the IEP team can focus on the needs of the IEP eligible student. At the IEP meeting it is important to remember that sharing of information is important and by doing this will eliminate confusion later on. The itinerate may only be in the district once a month or twice a month, and not familiar with the building, emergency procedures, physical layout of the building, and bell schedules. As well as the district personnel may not be aware of the itinerates service area (geographic), contact numbers, or needed supplies. Therefore, many of the same types of information that would be given a substitute teacher would be appropriate to provide to the itinerate with a "Visiting Teacher" information packet. In turn the itinerate would provided similar types of information about his/her schedule.

As the IEP is formulated it is important to ask questions about what if services are interrupted for whatever reasons. What is our plan? The discussion and planning can go from general to then very specific. Such as the next step is to consider issues specifically about inclement types of weather and ask questions like "What do we do when the pass is closed and the itinerate cannot be on site to work with the student? " This need not become a non-compliance issue. This is the opportunity for the IEP team (of which the parents are member) to brainstorm, list options, share ideas and include on the IEP what those options are so that service can continue or can be rescheduled without it negatively impacting the student.

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UTILIZING PARAEDUCATORS AS LIAISONS TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The purpose of this presentation is to describe the contributions that paraeducators can make to the classroom using their connections to the community and their knowledge of the local area.

Building relationships between schools and community can be difficult for teachers because of the time involved in making the necessary contacts for carrying out activities such as field trips, utilizing community members in class presentations, meeting with parents and incorporating community resources in class lessons. This can be a particular challenge if teachers do not live in the community served by the school or if they are new to the area and not knowledgeable of local resources. One strategy to assist teachers in developing community relationships is utilizing the background and connections the paraeducator has with the community.

Paraeducator is defined by Anna Lou Pickett (1999) as school staff whose positions are instructional in nature and who work under the supervision of teachers or other professional practitioners who are responsible for the instructional activities. These staff members are also referred to as teacher's aide, teacher's assistant, and other terms. The term paraeducator is preferred because it indicates that the position is unique within the field of education in a manner similar to paramedic and paralegal (Pickett, 2001).

With regard to utilizing paraeducators as liaisons to the local community, French and Pickett (1997) indicate the paraeducator's knowledge of the local community might be used to enhance classroom activities, develop work placements, incorporate community and cultural traditions into school activities, network with parents and facilitate access to community activities and events. As a follow up to these suggestions the presenters conducted a two-phase study involving special education teachers and paraeducators from schools in Montana and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funded schools. All participants in both phases of the study came from communities with a population of less than 125,000.

Method

Participants

Phase One of the study involved unstructured interviews with four paraeducators and three teachers. Each of the participants had been identified as part of a teacher/paraeducator team, which utilized the paraeducator's background in the community to enhance school activities.

Phase Two of the study involved nine group sessions with paraeducators and teachers. Five of the groups involved representatives from Montana schools and four groups involved representatives of BIA funded schools. The sessions with BIA funded school representatives occurred at Bemidgi, Minnesota; Green Bay, Wisconsin; Phoenix, Arizona; and Tampa, Florida.

Table1. Group Sessions Participants

Participant Category	Number Attending
BIA funded schools participants	
Paraeducators	53
Teachers	10
Administrators	7
Montana School participants	
Paraeducators	73
Teachers	21
Administrators	1
Not specified	40

Procedures

Phase One: Unstructured Interviews.

The seven interviews conducted during Phase One were in-depth interviews. The interviews focused on getting information from three areas:

- What kinds of activities are implemented in their teams that utilize paraeducators as liaisons with the local community?
- What system supports are necessary to make such activities effective?
- What obstacles create difficulties for these types of activities?

The information from the interview was utilized to identify themes that would serve as the discussion outline for the group sessions.

Phase Two: Group Sessions.

The group sessions consisted of a PowerPoint presentation on the themes identified in the unstructured interviews. The audience was then requested to provide input on the theme or examples of activities they had carried out related to the theme. As the audience provided information, it was recorded on an easel pad of paper.

Following the completion of all group sessions, the information from the session recording sheets was input into electronic format. Copies of the responses were provided to four investigators. The responses were sorted for duplicate or similar examples or factors. Also, the new pool of examples was analyzed for new themes.

Findings

A dominant theme across the interviews was that utilizing paraeucators as a community/cultural liaison created a number of beneficial strategies for using the resources of communities to enhance educational activities. The participants described a wide variety of approaches related to how the paraeducators are connected to parents, can utilize community resources to enhance activities conducted in the classroom, can utilize community resources to create important education activities outside the classroom, and can utilize paraeducator community connections to create better communication with the community.

The interviews and group sessions provided rich description of what activities paraeducators are involved in that utilized community activities to enhance educational activities of the school. Understanding the variety of themes described under each topic provides insight into better planning and execution of similar activities in the future. The information is being utilized to develop a series of training videos to assist teacher/pareducator teams understand how to implement similar activities.

Activities related to the role of paraeducators as links to the community

Paraeducators interact with parents:

- Parents contact the paraeducators instead of teachers creating a "go between" role for the paraeducator.
- Paraeducators greet the family when students are picked up and dropped off at school.

- Paraeducators have lived in the community a long time and know parents, families, values, and culture.
- Paraeducators may work with the same child for a number of years and have developed a rapport with the parents regarding their child.

Paraeducators suggest in-school activities based on their knowledge of the community:
- Paraeducators know where to get community-based materials for the classroom.
- Paraeducators modify lessons to reflect local culture.

Paraeducators assist with arranging school activities in the community:
- Paraeducators have special connections for field trips.
- Paraeducators can assist with work placements for students in the community.
- Paraeducators know accessibility issues at community sites.
- Paraeducators are aware of transportation options in the community.
- Paraeducators know of community volunteer and service activities in which students can participate.

Paraeducators have other roles in the community:
- The paraeducator is a resource based on previous employment or a current second job in the community.
- The paraeducator is a resource based on their avocational activities in the community.
- The paraeducator is a resource based on previous education and training received that can be applied to their current position.
- The paraeducator is a resource based on the community roles of their family and friends.
- Paraeducators may be parents of a child with a disability and have contact with parent organizations.

Paraeducators bring the culture of the local community to school activities:
- The paraeducator may be fluent in speaking the local language.
- The paraeducator may know the subtle elements of local culture not found written down or described anywhere.
- The paraeducator knows practices related to local industries.
- The paraeducator knows local work standards.

Paraeducators model community attributes:
- Paraeducators can model employer expectations.
- Paraeducators can model appropriate behavior at public events.
- Paraeducators may have a child with a disability and model parent expectations.

Paraeducators' acquaintance with families in the community contributes to school activities:
- Paraeducators know where to find parents even if they are not at home.
- Paraeducators may have connections that can help with fundraising.

Obstacles to utilizing paraeducators as links to the community

General problems related to utilizing paraeducators as links to the community:
- Teachers' concerns regarding confidentiality include that it may be overlooked by paraeducators.
- Paraeducators' concern regarding confidentiality is it may prevent access to pertinent student information enabling effective student services.
- Multiple roles of paraeducators can blur the issue
- Lack of paraeducator training on the topic.
- Teacher liability when a paraeducator is in the community representing the school.
- There is not time for planning such activities.

School procedures can interfere with utilizing paraeducators as links to the community:
- Paraeducators are often unable to attend school meetings and are therefore unaware of changes in school procedures and policies when asked by members of the community.
- Schools do not provide position descriptions or define the parameters of paraeducator positions.

- Paraeducators may not attend Individualized Education Program meetings or have access to the records of students with whom they work, leading to uncertainty of the purpose of lessons.
- Paraeducator training is not budgeted.

Working for schools can interfere with a paraeducator's image in the community:

- A job description is important so paraeducators can understand and explain these roles to community members.
- Paraeducators are responsible for presenting professional images to the community.
- Community members, including parents, have thought of paraeducators as babysitters, secretaries, art materials coordinators, bulletin board decorators, and recess/cafeteria/hallway monitors.
- Community members, including parents, have stated that teachers should be teaching, not paraeducators.

Positive factors that support paraeducators as links to the community

Paraeducator/teacher teams coordinate linkages to the community:

- Team meetings at least once a week to coordinate activities including those related to community links.
- Paraeducators and teachers attend conferences together to ensure that both receive similar information and can discuss its use in their situation.
- Capitalize on the rapport between parents and paraeducators at meetings that include parents and teachers.

Paraeducators need teacher supports to improve community contacts:

- Recognition by teachers and all school personnel that paraeducators are school representatives.
- Availability of teachers to assist paraeducators in situations causing anxiety.
- Teachers and paraeducators can discuss the paraeducator's community background.

Teacher, administrator, and paraeducator skills that make successful community linkages:

- Recognition of the paraeducators' valuable community knowledge.
- Acknowledgement of paraeducators' significant contributions in developing community links.
- Teachers need to clarify roles for themselves and paraeducators regarding community link activities.
- Teachers need to monitor activities of paraeducators when they are out in the community.

These findings were used to develop a series of videos to be used in training teacher/paraeducator teams. Samples of the series were shown during the presentation to demonstrate many of the principles mentioned above. Videos in the series include:

Video Series

Introduction.

- The introduction includes a discussion of the changing roles of paraeducators and stresses the "three c's" as important to all activities involved in the series. The "three c's" are: confidentiality, communication, and a clear description of roles.

Paraeducators as liaisons to their community - In the classroom.

- Video demonstrating a paraeducator modifying a lesson from a book to demonstrate community attributes.
- Video demonstrating utilizing paraeducators to arrange for guest speakers from the community.
- Video demonstrating how paraeducators background in the school can help a new teacher prepare for meeting students for the first time.

Paraeducators as liaisons to their community - In the community.

- Video demonstrating utilizing a team of paraeducators' knowledge of the community in planning field trips.
- Video demonstrating utilizing a team of paraeducators to develop activities that incorporate information on local culture into school activities.

- Video demonstrating utilizing a paraeducator to coordinate the development of resources to support an extra-curricular trip for students.

Paraeducators as liaisons to their community - Connections with parents.

- Video demonstrating a paraeducator making a home visit with a parent at the request of a teacher.
- Video demonstrating a paraeducator using their connection with a student's guardian to a assist a teacher to become acquainted with the guardian.
- Video demonstrating a paraeducator contacted by a parent outside of school arranging for the parent to discuss the issues of concern with the teacher.

Paraeducators as liaisons to their community - The three c's.

- Video demonstrating various components of confidentiality.
- Video demonstrating various components of communication
- Video demonstrating various components of clear descriptions of roles.

Summary

The role of paraeducators has changed drastically in recent years. They have become a member of an instructional team. As part of the team, the connections that the paraeducator has to the community become valuable resources when developing instructional plans and other school activities. This presentation has shown how a number of schools have been utilizing these resources and introduced those attending the session to a series of training videos developed to assist other teams to make plans for utilizing paraeducators and their knowledge of the local community in enhancing a variety of school activities.

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WHAT CAN I USE TOMORROW? STRATEGIES FOR ACCESSIBLE MATH AND SCIENCE CURRICULUM FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS IN RURAL SCHOOLS

A principal from a small rural district in central Oregon jokingly remarked at a northwest regional math conference that, "I wish that I could fill my building with special education teachers." For the most part teachers trained in special education methods have a deep understanding of students' needs and the learning process from which they are able to create a synergy of strengths. The ability of special education teachers to create effective learning environments is a major factor in the rising demands that are being placed on them within the profession. This paper will discuss the changing roles and responsibilities of special educators, strategies to support collaborative content delivery in math and science, and instructional and adaptation strategies special educators "can use tomorrow."

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the special educator are changing. A substantial increase in the number of students with disabilities receiving their education in general education classrooms has also occurred (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). This has resulted in a trend to utilize special education teachers as learning facilitators in inclusive classrooms (Friend & Cook, 2000). Indeed, these practices place new demands on teachers.

In years past the primary focus for the special education teacher has been as an expert in learning and in meeting student specific needs. Today the focus is still on how to best meet individual needs so learning can take place, however, there is also an increasing demand for content expertise in curriculum areas such as math and science. Moreover, current curriculum reform efforts in math and science recommend a different and more in-depth knowledge of content specific pedagogy, curricular standards, and strategies (Weiss, 1994; CBMS, 2001).

There is little doubt that the special educator must engage in an on-going balancing act requiring expertise in both learning and content. In some instances he/she will wear the "hat" of learning specialist, providing direct service and individualizing content and strategies for single or small groups of students. In other situations he/she will consult with the general educator to design and/or assist in the delivery of accommodations for the inclusive math or science classroom. Yet, another role the special educator might play would include that of collaborator, where general and special education teachers implement a type of team teaching strategy to deliver content in co-taught classrooms. In fact, it's not unusual for a special educator to wear multiple "hats."

The changing role of the special education teacher is only part of the impetus for broadening demands for content mastery. Educational accountability in the form of national and state standards based competency testing has dramatically rewritten the special education teacher's role (Kohn, 2000; Popham, 2000a; Popham 2000b; Elliot & Thurlow, 2000). Recent regulations in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act require increased participation of students with disabilities in state or district-mandated accountability assessment systems. This requires that professionals ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, have access to the general education curriculum. Access to curriculum, however, isn't just about the "place" where content is delivered or even about the "people" adapting or delivering content. Several factors interact to impact the degree of success the learner has in inclusive math and science classrooms.

What Does it Take for Success?

Knowledge

Content Knowledge. Teachers must initially have a knowledge of current mathematics and science content, pedagogy and curriculum. This has changed drastically over the past decade as reform efforts have become infused into pedagogical training, curriculum materials and recommended instructional practices. The level and degree to which a special educator comes prepared to deliver, discuss and collaborate on content delivery in math and science varies widely. In science for instance, special educators receive little to no training in content pedagogy (Ormsbee & Finson, 2000; Polloway, Patton, & Serna, 2000).

One recommended pedagogical practice involves designing mathematics and science curriculum around "Big Ideas" (Kame'enui, Carnine, Dixon, Simmons, & Coyne, 2002). Simply put this involves infusing and interweaving ideas/concepts that are the foundation for understanding mathematics and science across lessons/units/materials. In mathematics this centers on interweaving the big ideas of concepts such as place value, expanded notation, mathematical properties, and equivalence across instructional topics/concepts. In science, this might include integrating concepts such as such as patterns, comparisons or discrepancies, impact or control of variables, and hypothesis testing across units of instruction. (Kame'enui, et. al, 2002). Big ideas assist learners in the generalization of mathematical and scientific concepts and learners move away from banks of isolated knowledge and facts.

Yet, knowledge and enthusiasm are simply not enough to ensure accessible math and science curricula. For inclusive educators this also includes: "... a) understanding the meanings, principles and process of a wide range of mathematics appropriate for the needs of students; b) recognizing unusual performance on the part of a student and how to adapt activities to determine the basis for this performance; and c) knowing the developing characteristics of the student in such detail that individualized curricula choices can be made as to when it is an appropriate time to present certain mathematics to a student, the sequence in which it should be presented, the intensity or length of time one should stay on topic to assure master, the mixture of mathematics that should be presented and how to determine if a students has attained proficiency and mastery of the principles" (Parmar & Cawley, 1998, p. 225).

Knowledge of classroom climate. The teacher is the major deciding factor in establishing the climate of the classroom and in making content accessible (Ginot, 1972). As the deciding factor, it is important that the teacher be well versed in establishing a classroom that meets the demands of content emergent learners. Although it is very important that the teacher be well versed in content, education must be focused on learning, which is a student-centered process.

Part of the paradigm shift from teaching content to teaching students requires an examination of the stressors within a learning environment. A certain amount of stress is healthy and productive in the learning process, but apply too much stress and the learning curve sharply decreases (Sherwood, 1965). When a student is over the optimum stress level the goal shifts from learning to survival. Teachers can do a lot in the organizational process to reduce stress for students. Teachers must create a classroom environment that is both supportive and content rich.

Establishing a climate that is student friendly and steeped in math and science content can be a challenge. Mathematics and science content textbooks are among the most difficult as they are characteristically different from the narrative materials of the other contents (Hollander, 1988). While experts underscore the importance of inquiry methods of math and science instruction, many educators still rely on textbooks for a substantial amount of instruction (Schumaker & Lenz, 1999; Schumm, 1999). Students must draw conclusions from the text and merge those inferences with the symbolic representation required to solve situations that are often foreign in concept, content, and nature. If a second grade student is posed the problem, "I bought three packages of pencils and each package has three pencils in it. How many pencils did I buy?" he/she will be able to answer. However, if you ask the same student to explain what 3^2 is, he/she will probably be unable to make sense of the symbolic representation. This is the battle teachers face when they rely on most textbooks (symbolic in nature) to teach content that is not contextually grounded. When math and science concepts are taught the teacher needs to either teach a new concept

within an existing context or teach the use of an existing concept within a new context. It is when a new concept is taught in a new context that students are at a profound disadvantage.

Knowledge of students applied to learning. Next, teachers must recognize the needs and strengths of students as well as the processes students use to make sense and generalize math and science concepts. Many students derive a correct answer but lack the understanding to elaborate on the relevant concepts and procedures that were involved. Having children show their knowledge in different formats deepens their understanding of the concepts as well as encourages them to integrate the new learning into other content domains. This does not have to lengthen the math or science period but does require the teacher to reorganize the allotted instructional time. The teacher has to establish an environment that is contextual problem solving by nature and less didactic. Students need longer periods of time in class to problem solve with peers, discuss and re-process not only solutions but also the process of finding solutions.

One method that supports student needs involves grouping. Working in pairs or triads provides several benefits for students with diverse abilities. First, students can validate what each understood from the teacher's instruction as well as validate each other's construction of meaning from the activities and problems presented in the classroom situations. By having students work in pairs they share the responsibilities of solving the problem, while noting process thoughts in individual journals, etc. Partners (2-3 member groups work best) are equally responsible for facilitating the learning while larger groups disintegrate into one or two people taking the lead and the other team members passively following (not all that different from teacher lead didactic class instruction). The teacher, based on individual strengths, personalities, cognitive styles, experiential background, etc., should make conscious decisions about how to partner students for maximum learning. Self-selected partners often are based on social strengths and not learning potential.

Students are often insecure when they are learning a new content skill. Teachers must also consider and be aware of the impact of their grading and feedback practices on student achievement and motivation. Traditional grading draws attention to the mistakes a child makes. Use of a bottom-up approach, where marks (+) are put by the items that the student gets correct as he/she earns points shifts the emphasis. Students view their efforts as progress towards a goal instead of just trying to avoid costly mistakes. Mistakes are an impetus for future learning only if the cost of making a mistake is not too high. Many students cannot afford to make mistakes under the current grading systems and hence the teachable moment is lost to arguments, disappointment, anger, etc. over missed points.

Self-awareness. Teachers who are well versed and enjoy teaching, a particular content, typically have a wider variety of approaches to employ in making the content accessible to students. Teachers with a deep understanding of a content can generate a greater variety of approaches as well as applications to the child's real world. Being able to create contextual situations to embed new content skills is a key element in establishing experiences for learning. By using national standards as well as state and local district standards to generate classroom skills the teacher frees himself or herself from limitations of a textbook. By focusing on the skills to be taught a teacher can then decide what tool or tools (manipulatives, computer programs, text material, situational scenario, etc.) are best suited to an individual group of students.

What Can I Use Tomorrow? Content Tips and Strategies:
• When students work in pairs, have one write the problem on the board and the other explain it. This will help the teacher to assess individual students even when working in pairs. • Create a game table/center where all the games used to teach the content skills are available for the students continual use. Students will continually reinforce their math skills and discipline problems will be reduced. • Create a "vocabulary wall" of terms that are commonly used in math and science. Students' vocabulary will be reinforced if they have immediate access to terms. (Avoid using pronouns in the instructional cycle.) • Coordinate homework assignments across grade level/contents to limit the total nightly homework. • Enroll in a class or workshop that focuses on the content area that you feel weakest. • Teach and center instruction around the "Big Ideas." There is considerable content understanding required of students. Interweave concepts such as mathematical principles, place value, number sense, etc. into lessons.

Collaboration

Teachers, whether they are special or general educators, can no longer shut their doors and instruct in isolation. The nature of diverse school populations, growing thrust for integrated curriculum, and increasing numbers of students with identified disabilities require expertise across traditional boundaries (Blalock, 2001; Friend & Cook, 2001). While special educators have traditionally interacted collaboratively in multidisciplinary and individualized education program teams, the type of collaboration required for accessible content delivery and accommodation in math and science curriculum require additional considerations.

First, teachers can draw upon the expertise of one another. When teachers collaboratively pool their individual class activities together from each content area they can construct a menu of options. Burns (2000; 1990) suggests that by providing an environment that includes several options, students can construct knowledge by having several meaningful experiences. The menu concept is based on the idea that teachers construct a one to two page menu of 4-8 activities around one concept. Students select and engage in several options during the course of the class period. Students have the freedom to select the activities they want to engage in which allows them to be vested in the tasks selected. It also allows them to select the learning tasks that best fit their individual learning needs. The activities are contextual in nature as well as diverse, allowing students to have several real world experiences with a mathematical or science concept as part of the instructional process. Teachers are cooperatively creating and sharing content menus so there is a natural cohesion and quality in the learning tasks. Materials can also be pooled to support each menu reducing the overall cost in materials as well as materials and other resources. Moreover, the menu approach provides teachers multiple opportunities to embed specific types of adaptations into instructional materials to support a wide variety of students' strengths and needs.

Teachers also need to utilize effective collaboration strategies. These include such steps as: 1) determining a purpose and time frame for collaboration; 2) discussing strengths knowledge and abilities in content and instructional strategies; 3) planning explicit roles and responsibilities; 4) identifying needs and possible interventions, activities, strategies; 5) brainstorming possible road blocks and solutions; 6) planning curriculum 7) planning modifications; 8) implementing curriculum and modifications and 9) monitoring and evaluating the success of collaboratively delivered curriculum (Blalock, 2001; Friend & Cook, 2000).

Additionally, teachers can incorporate and model collaborative strategies through peer tutoring. Proactive tutoring (Tobias, 1990) is a strategy that has tutors in the classroom to help students comprehend and master a lesson by getting help during the regular classroom instruction. In this way all students are allowed to benefit from the instructional cycle and the tutoring session that often happens outside the regular classroom is grounded in the same instruction as well as manipulatives. Teachers can select students from within the class to peer tutor, call in outside tutors such as parents or students from other grades, or utilize their collaborative teaching partners. The proactive tutoring allows for a reduced ratio and multiple perspectives on a lesson. Peer tutoring has been demonstrated as an effective intervention for students with varying strengths and skills (Mastroprieri & Scruggs, 2000) with benefits both to tutees and tutors. While a number of varying peer tutoring models have been discussed, perhaps the most critical elements of success involve careful training, monitoring and evaluation of the tutoring program. Some considerations include 1) clarify goals and objective of the tutoring program with tutors and tutees; 2) provide tutors and tutees specific goals for the tutoring session(s); 3) select and match tutors carefully, with consideration toward compatibility of partners, 4) train tutors in effective materials and interaction skills; 5) establish and convey procedures and standards for tutoring session; 6) schedule and consistently allow time for tutoring session; and 7) monitor, adjust and evaluate the effectiveness of the tutoring intervention (Mastroprieri & Scruggs, 2000).

What Can I Use Tomorrow? Collaboration Tips and Strategies:
• Challenge another class to a weekly contest. This will promote community within the classroom as they work together to outperform another class.
• Create a bank of instructional activities with colleagues on selected math and science topics. Share and expand the menu bank across time. Record successes, challenges, ideas for future use in the "bank."
• Develop a collaboration wish list of the types of collaborative activities and supports that would benefit students. Share with other interested individuals in the school.
• Start a proactive tutoring partnership with older students, parents, teachers, support personnel, or by matching up students within your classroom.

Strategies for Accessible Math and Science Content

Student Involvement

By the nature of special education, in particularly the Individualized Education Program (IEP), each student is viewed as a person not as an object. This distinction is important as it shifts the focus from planning a successful lesson to planning for the success of students (Lewin, 1999). Students need to be given explanations for the skills and behaviors that are expected of them. In the same way the limitations of the environment and the people within the environment should be a consideration of the teacher as well as all students. Becoming responsible for their own learning begins with realistic expectations, the right to ask questions, the freedom to be an active learner, and quality guidance.

Students need to be encouraged to explore their own strengths and weaknesses. By encouraging students to explore metacognitive thinking styles they develop an understanding for their own strengths and weaknesses (Sternberg, 1997; Gardner, 1993). This understanding facilitates students to develop avenues to take advantage of their strengths when dealing with the different content areas. Teachers love to help students and often modify the lesson or manipulative to better meet the individual needs of students. While this is noble of the teachers it is also handicapping to the student. Students need to be able to apply metacognitive strategies to their daily lives outside the school. So, the focus needs to be on students adapting to meet the learning tasks as well as knowing how to select tools and adapt the learning to their individual strengths effectively. The teacher's role in this process is to expose students to different metacognitive strategies and allow students the freedom to adapt the environment and assignments.

What Can I Use Tomorrow? Strategies and Tips for Student Involvement
• Have students solve 10 story problems with a partner based on the lesson content instead of a set of preformatted problems. Then have them use the concepts from the lesson to create story problems. • Have students create games that utilize the skills. Create a classroom math and/or science trivial pursuit game. As your students master a skill they are given cards to create their own questions to be included in the ever-growing classroom set of question cards. • Have students work the problems out on individual dry-wipe boards or on scrap paper first. Then transfer their work to their journal or assignment paper. This allows them to work freely on the problem first and then organize it for others to follow. • As concepts are experienced in the classroom have students create posters illustrating the concept (visual cues and mathematical cues) with all the appropriate vocabulary (linguistic cues) to be posted in the room. • Have students individually and in groups solve 3-4 story/lab problems that require critical thinking. Then discuss how they solved the problems and analyze what strategies were used. Help students to begin to verbalize their metacognitive strengths and preferences.

Organizational Strategies

The teacher's job is to align the curriculum in such a way that the standards are translated into daily instructional events. The skills outlined by the standards can be quite difficult but they do not have to be mind-boggling. Teachers that are well versed in the content can analyze the skills and present them in the order that makes the most sense to the students in terms of context and ease of cognitive organization. Point in case is the dreaded multiplication facts. Most teachers present them in the 1-9 order but Thornton & Noxon (1977) suggest exposure to the multiplication facts in a 2,5,0,1,9,squares, and then the 10 remaining facts sequence is much less stressful. Constance Kamii (1994) agrees that order of difficulty is an important consideration but instead of teaching 1x1 through 1x9 the sequence is alter to teach 0x0 through 4x4 first. Regardless of the final sequence it should be a conscious teacher made decision, with the students' learning potential in mind, not some arbitrary sequence.

Meaningful integration of content. The use of reality based, story problems that are created for the students as well as the ones created by the students allows for the integration of content that is relevant to the students' lives as part of the lesson. The story problem integration is not only intrinsically more interesting to students but is also integrates literacy, science, language arts, etc. into every lesson. Piaget was critical of the departmentalized education approach as it weakened the inherent integration of subject matters with each other as well as the physical

environment. A prime example was found in a 4th grade math class where students were asked to multiply 25 by 7. All 24 of the students observed began working the problem using the traditional algorithm, which took about 2 minutes for the majority of the students to get an answer. Several days later one of the story problems presented the students with a situation where they needed to find the sum in a piggy bank that contained 7 quarters. Most of the children involved solved the problem in their head or by drawing 7 quarters and grouping 4 as one dollar and 3 as 75 cents. Piaget suggested that if content construction of knowledge is promoted then students will naturally make connections, forging a much deeper understanding of the content (Kamii, 1996).

Presenting content: The work of Gagne (1992) emphasized the difference between planning a lesson and designing an effective instructional sequence. While the two are related it is important for novice teachers or experienced teachers that are novice to a content area to do more in depth planning for the instructional delivery of a lesson. The effective instructional sequence is made up of nine instructional events that may be utilized in the order that is most appropriate for each specific lesson. While order and even repetition of the instructional event may vary it is vital that all nine events are utilized during the instructional sequence. Each of the nine instructional events is briefly summarized below.

- Attention Getting Devise – Devise a variety of ways that are comfortable for you as the teacher and effective in getting your students' attention. The goal is to relate the attention getting device to the lesson that is to be presented so continuity is maintained. Consider the use of cues in math and science to alert students to content.
- Inform the Learner of the Objective – Let the students know what skill will be taught that day and what will be expected from each student at the end of the lesson.
- Recall Prerequisite Learning – If the objective for today requires students to possess pertinent information that information should be quickly reviewed prior to beginning the new lesson.
- Teach the New Content – Provide the students with activities that require the new skill(s) and have them raise questions as they work with the task/skill. Manipulatives should be readily available for use in the instructional, guided practice, and individual phases of the lesson. Students must be actively involved at high rates of participation. Demonstrate and provide a permanent product as needed of the content. Teachers may also embed the use of memory devices such as mnemonics to assist learners in acquiring new content (Mastroprieri & Scruggs, 2000; Miller & Mercer, 1998)
- Group/Guided Practice Note: Students work in groups or as a class with an organized set of problem solving opportunities. By working in groups (pairs preferred) the students get to guide and validate each other's work. (Do not allow students to select a partner. As the teacher you know the strengths and weaknesses of your students and are much more capable of pairing students that will compliment each other on a learning task so, plan ahead.)
- Individual Practice – Since the goal is to get all students to master the skill it is essential that after the guided practice phase each student be given individual opportunities to demonstrate their skills.
- Feedback – The teacher should provide non-judgmental feedback aimed at improving the student's performance. This should be task specific and yet acknowledge effort, ideas, and risk-taking.
- Assessment – This is an ongoing process that helps the instructor and the students monitor the progress that is being made. The major purpose of assessment is to guide the teacher in constructing learning activities for future lessons.
- Retention and Transfer – The goal is to relate the skills that were developed throughout the lesson to the students' lives and real world experiences.

Assessing Content: The purpose of assessment is to help plan the actions that the teacher needs to engage the students in for the current and future lessons (Popham, 2001). There are many ways to glean the information needed to effectively match instruction with student development. Traditionally teachers have used written assignments as the main source of assessment information. However, written assignments are often a day delayed and as such end up being turned immediately before the next lesson is to begin. Tests and written assignments are not always timely given the nature of assessment. Other assessment strategies can provide necessary information if employed in a systematic manner. Observational assessment requires the teacher to interact and observe students actively engaged in a task at hand. These observational notes are then compiled at the end of the period/day to guide how the learning environment will be structured for the following day's lesson. Through observation teachers can utilize performance assessment, authentic engagement, dialogue checks, etc. to assess and document strengths and weaknesses in achievement. Index cards or peel-and-stick address labels can be used to record the documentation

on during the class and then easily be sorted into individual student folders or profile sheets to create a longitudinal record of a child's progress and needs.

What Can I Use Tomorrow? Organizational Tips and Strategies:
• Pass out a set of test items or story problems that have all been worked but contain errors. Have students get together in pairs and find the errors in each problem. • Instead of using horizontal number lines create vertical number lines. Numbers increase as the students count up and decrease as they count down or subtract. This makes physical and contextual sense to students. • Instead of using circles for students to work with in creating fractional representations use graph paper. Circles are difficult to bisect into equal parts. However if the students can create rectangles by tracing the grid lines on graph paper equal parts can be represented easily. • Challenge your students to create a poem, limerick, rap, cartoon, mini-dramas, etc. that make a play on the mathematical terms, content, and/or applications. • Every 12-15 minutes of the class period shift the activity. (i.e. teacher directed learning, partner task, presentation of findings to the class, individual practice, etc.) When one mode or activity is maintained for too long (over 15 min.) students begin to withdraw from active learning.

Literacy Strategies

With the increasing and changing demands for content coverage, textbooks in mathematics and science have changed over the past decade. The information and activities presented in these texts require students typically to have grade level or above reading comprehension skills, to understand complex vocabulary, to use textbook and content level study strategies, and to respond using varying levels of written expression (Schumaker & Lenz, 1999). A number of textbooks provide little review, lack multiple examples to build generalization, and provide little supportive feedback or correction procedures (Polloway, et. al., 2000). Students, therefore, may not be able to key into important terms, relationships, concepts or processes used in textbooks (Miller & Mercer, 1999; Schumaker & Lenz, 1999). They may also experience difficulty following the written directions or responding to the demands requiring written or narrative responses. This means that many students, including some with disabilities remain at a disadvantage. When educators subscribe to a textbook driven approach, these students remain at a loss, unable to access the curriculum.

What Can I Use Tomorrow? Literacy Tips and Strategies:
• Create study guides and outlines (or partially completed outlines) of textbook information. These can be previewed prior to use of a reading selection and reviewed upon completion. • Use graphic organizers in advance of textbook use to cue main ideas and concepts within the chapter. • Preteach and provide vocabulary practice of key terms presented. • Prepare audiotapes of books or selected chapters. Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic may provide a desired textbook in audiotape format. Plan in advance to obtain the needed material. • Utilize Assistive Technology devices to support writing needs such as voice recognition software or use a low-tech option of tape recording responses.

Rural Considerations

Planning and delivering accessible math and science content in inclusive settings can be an enriching, exhausting, and exciting, prospect for both teachers and students. Maintaining content integrity while providing adaptations that promote successful learning to occur for varied student strengths and abilities is an ongoing process. It requires a desire and enthusiasm for the content, content specific knowledge, pedagogical skills supporting best practices, collaborative partnerships, and supportive organizational and literacy supports. Indeed this is a challenging order to fill. Rural educators, however, also face unique issues. They may incur certain challenges in addressing accessible content. Inadequate or unavailable resources (material, training, and personnel) are one such area. Within smaller communities, special educators may also have few other colleagues in their specific peer role group with whom to share successes and concerns, and with which to brainstorm accessible content solutions. Yet, rural educators are also at an advantage. Rural school communities offer more cohesive groups of parents, teachers,

and community members. These close ties can foster the collaboration process. It is through this type of continued dialogue, shared commitment, and community vision that meaningful accessible content can become a reality for more students.

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Early Childhood

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ASSESSING QUALITY INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE PLACEMENTS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Historical Framework: In the summer of 1998, the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) acting on parental concerns about the quality and availability of inclusive child care programs for their young children with special needs, offered to fund the Center for Community Inclusion (CCI) at the University of Maine in Orono and the Maine Department of Education to address these issues. The overarching goal of the proposal, *Maine's Inclusive Preschool Project: Creating Inclusive Early Care and Education Communities*, was to increase the quality and availability of high quality inclusive childcare and early childhood education. This would be accomplished by providing capacity building training, technical assistance, consultation, and support to early childhood providers, parents and other appropriate personnel to encourage and facilitate the inclusion of young children with disabilities in early childhood settings. Ultimately, funding for this 3 year project was provided by both the Maine DDC and the DOE, thus the Developmental Therapy (DT) Leadership Group was established to address these issues across the state.

Maine's Early Intervention system is comprised of 16 regional Child Development Services (CDS) sites. Of those 16 sites, 8 were chosen to participate in this Leadership Team. The group began by engaging in a Path strategic planning process to clarify project goals, objectives, potential partners and resources, next steps and timelines. Out of this process emerged two first steps: 1. Collect data in order to get a more complete understanding of what currently exists within the CDS sites across the state. 2. Conduct local field tests with the community programs using the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Early Childhood Assessment (or any of a number of other rating/assessment instruments that the group explored). As work began on these steps, several things became apparent: Much of the necessary data was not being collected/maintained; and even when data was available, definitions of critical importance differed. For example, one site might define an inclusive placement as one where a child spent part of the day or week outside of a special purpose program; while, another site might define an inclusive placement as an early childhood program where developmental therapy was embedded into the daily routines and activities. Additionally, it became apparent in researching and using nationally available program quality assessment tools that none fully met the group's need to measure quality in an *inclusive* child care program. At this point, decisions were made to defer the collection of data to other projects and individuals, and to begin the process of developing a tool and process that would meet needs in the state of Maine.

Development of the Assessment Instruments: From 1998 through 2000, the group continued to meet monthly to engage in reflective practice discussions and share resources. Field Test Version 1 of the *CDS Developmental Therapy Assessment & Monitoring* (instrument) was developed as an adaptation of an inclusion checklist from the Circle of Inclusion website. It evolved as a four-part process, starting with the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale/Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ECERS/ITERS); the Practice Observation Checklist; Maine's CDS compliance criteria; and the report/action plan. The instrument/process was field tested in ten community childcare/early care and education programs. Both the program staff and CDS (early intervention) staff completed ratings using the ECERS/ITERS and the Practice Observation Checklist. Further visits to discuss comparison of the program ratings, CDS compliance and development of action plans/next steps for the childcare program followed the initial observations. Results were shared at the monthly DT Leadership Group meetings. Several concerns arose out of these discussions. Some of the items were very subjective, leading to confusion on the part of the raters as well as contributing to potential conflict between early intervention and early childhood program

staff. The language/words used were open to interpretation. The rating scale key was confusing to users. The length of time necessary to complete the process was far too lengthy and prohibitive, up to 20 hours in some cases.

In order to address these issues in Version 2, the following changes were initiated: 1. A glossary would be included to clarify the definitions of words. 2. Examples would be included under each item to further clarify its meaning. To illustrate, an item in Version 1 reads "Facilitates children's need for movement/change of position. Assists by varying position every 30 seconds or as appropriate." Version 2 reads "Staff facilitate children's need for movement and change of position. Example: Staff arrange for activity changes to address a child's need for movement; staff assist a child with a physical disability by helping him play on the floor comfortably in a bean bag chair; staff are tuned into a child's need to be in a quiet location or to go outside and they respond appropriately." 3. The rating scale key was adapted to make it less confusing. 4. It could serve as a "stand alone" document, meaning that it would incorporate items intended to measure the application of early childhood developmentally appropriate practices/environments as well as items specific to recommended practices in the field of early intervention. This step was not intended to undermine the use of the ECERS or NAEYC instruments. Their use in some cases continued to be recommended. However, when time factors became overwhelming, a briefer version of the process was needed. Once these changes were completed, Version 2 was published as the *Assessment & Monitoring Tool for Inclusive Early Care and Education.*

Another field test was conducted using Version 2 and additional data was collected from CDS, CCI and community childcare staff. The feedback from this field test was very positive. Head Start and childcare programs began to request the instrument for use within their programs. Our research partners at the Center for Community Inclusion were asked to review the text and make recommendations. A concern arose at that point centered around the use of "double barrel" questions, meaning some items were trying to rate more than one thing. Other concerns were that the document's organization was confusing and some items were repetitive. Additionally, the instrument needed a field test for validity and reliability. With assistance from our research colleagues the instrument was revised and prepared for professional review prior to the final field test. Version 3 is our most current publication.

During the Spring of 2001, the Center for Community Inclusion and several of the professionals from the DT Leadership Group collaborated to develop a workshop series for the early childhood community partners who had field tested the Assessment & Monitoring Tool. The workshops were created in response to the action plans developed from the implementation of the assessment instrument. Training needs were identified and addressed through this process. Additionally, these free workshops were proposed as a way to show appreciation for participation in our field tests. The first workshop focused on the broader issues of inclusion: What is it? What laws, research and attitudes support it? Is the value of inclusion reflected in (aligned with) program policy, practice, curriculum, and assessment structures? Does the program mission speak to diversity and inclusion? Does staff know it, and can each clearly articulate how what he/she does contributes to a positive school community? The follow up workshop addressed some of the day-to-day program challenges facing early childhood staff, such as: How can Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP)/Individual Education Plans (IEP) be addressed within the typical preschool routine and activities? How can developmental therapy providers and specialists, i.e., speech and language, occupational therapists, provide services within the early childhood classroom? What are the benefits? What skills are needed to offer support to classroom teachers under a consultation model? What additional resources are available to support teachers who are working with children with special needs in community settings? These workshops were well attended and participants were enthusiastic about the learning opportunity.

Lessons Learned in the process of developing the assessment instrument:

- Nationwide, many professional organizations are working on similar assessments. Many have requested our tool as soon as it is published.
- Although we had some initial conflict generated by unclear wording and subjective language, on the whole, early care and education programs were enthusiastic about working with the DT Leadership Group; and appreciative of the changes made based on their feedback. Additionally, providers who had not had an opportunity to use the tool but had heard about it through colleagues approached members of the group to ask if they could use the instrument in their programs. A number of programs expressed appreciation for the clear expectations for quality inclusive early care and education settings that came out of the assessment process.
- Tying the recommendations to a planning tool, which identifies specific goals, persons responsible, timelines, and outcomes resulted in increased collaboration and greater likelihood of continuous improvement. This process was very productive for early care and education staff who might have had some trepidation in

beginning the process. They were reassured that the assessment would not result in a document focusing solely on shortcomings and compliance standards but that it identified strengths and established a collaborative partnership for working on program needs.

- The field test clarified inherent differences between traditional early intervention service delivery and early childhood developmentally appropriate models. One example of this was highlighted as the authors attempted to use the instrument in a special purpose program. This program was highly teacher-directed as opposed to the early childhood models using developmentally appropriate practices, which tend to be more child-directed. As a result, the special purpose program scored lower on the rating scale. This underscores the importance of bringing together the best of both early intervention and early childhood best practices and honoring their contributions within both fields, as professionals develop curriculum, assessment and strategies that meet the needs of all children, including those with disabilities.
- At the state level, administrators are considering how the instrument might be utilized to build capacity within the field. A potential connection is emerging between the early intervention certifications, which are currently being developed, and the assessment instrument. One possibility is that it may be used, in addition to educational criteria, to determine program eligibility for being considered a developmental therapy placement.
- Systemic and programmatic support for Early Intervention staff to provide this service (implementation of the assessment instrument, collaboration on action plans, and any ongoing training and support) contributes to success of the process, continuous improvement and capacity building in the early childhood arena.
- Issues such as early childhood program staff turnover, level of education, staff-child ratios, pay and benefits influence the quality of care provided to all children. They are of particular importance to the quality of care offered to children with special needs since caretaker skill and small classroom numbers are of heightened importance to this group.
- The use of this instrument in Maine is optional. It was not intended to be used as a comprehensive assessment instrument and would not therefore be used in place of more structured or complete assessment formats. It serves largely as a screening tool for quality inclusive early care and education settings. Within Maine it may also be used to identify potential developmental therapy placements.

Lessons from using the instrument in the field:

- It is important to introduce the instrument in a positive way, explaining the advantages to the program, such as identifying training needs and building program capacity. It is helpful to begin the process with early care and education programs with which the rater already has a relationship. Many early childhood professionals were enthusiastic about the opportunity to collaborate with early intervention professionals, and to know that they would receive assistance in problem solving around complex child and programmatic issues. In a few cases, a comparison of the rating results showed disparity between early care and early intervention appraisals. This required good negotiation and conflict resolution skills on the part of the early intervention professional in order to maintain an ongoing relationship.
- In the earlier versions, some of the rating disparity was likely influenced by language that was not specific and therefore contributed to greater subjectivity on the part of both the early intervention and early childhood staffs. Later versions included clearer language and examples, which offered greater reliability and objectivity, as well as less disparity in rater appraisals.
- Use of the instrument required a commitment of time. Initially, when it was using along with the ECERS or NAEYC instruments, the time involved was substantial and therefore prohibitive for early intervention staff. The process has been greatly simplified but continues to necessitate substantial time commitments.
- Use of the instrument requires skill in relationship building, collaboration and negotiation particularly when there is disparity in rater assessments. Building and maintaining a relationship with the early childhood program is an important necessary focus for early intervention staff and is essential to successful outcomes.
- At times it was difficult to rate a program or classrooms within a program because great disparity existed in teaching styles and skills. If one teacher for example is very skilled but classroom aides are functioning at a lower skill level, the experience of children in that classroom is likely to be mixed. Additionally, one classroom in a program may be providing a developmentally appropriate curriculum, while others may not.
- Often the process revealed underlying systemic issues that contributed to lack of overall quality and which were not immediately amenable to the action plans developed. The dilemma of staff education, pay and class size will need to be attacked at the state and federal levels in order to respond more completely to the needs of all children.

- It is important for the early intervention staff to clarify common goals, shared vision and responsibilities before proceeding with staff development plans. Trying to move forward before laying this foundation is counterproductive and can lead to confusion, or even obstruction on the part of one or both partners.
- It is better to begin building early childhood program capacity by identifying one or two goals to undertake, rather than trying to tackle too many issues at once. Trying to work on too many goals at a time can be overwhelming and discouraging to both partners. It is important to build success into the process, so that staff can see that progress is being made. It is also important to build on the strengths that currently exist in the program, continuously focusing on how these can contribute to accomplishing goals.
- As a whole program quality for all children is the essential foundation in building capacity to care for children with special needs. The availability of quality developmentally appropriate childcare programs is essential in the expansion of good inclusive early care environments.
- It is important to identify local and state resources that could meet the needs identified so that the local early intervention site does not get identified as the only source of assistance. Building the early childhood program's knowledge of these resources and how they can be accessed should be a part of all first line training.

Lessons learned as the assessment instrument was being developed:

- Language matters. It is important to leave nothing up to interpretation. Including glossaries, definitions, and examples can help to clarify the text and contribute to tool reliability.
- Be clear on outcomes. What will be measured? Who will be involved? Do they speak the same professional language/jargon as the writer of the text? Are all partners clear on the intended outcomes, and how these will be measured?
- Approach the work collaboratively. Turf issues, hierarchical structures and competing egos are a feature of daily experience for most professionals. All of these can undermine the collaborative process. It is important therefore, to begin with a focus group, strategic planning process or other meeting structure that pulls together the key stakeholders. This builds trust, assures that all partners are onboard and contributing their expertise. Additionally, it increases the likelihood that administrators will extend implicit permission for individuals at lower levels of their organizations to participate and make related decisions as the work moves forward, i.e., prevents obstructionism.
- One instrument cannot measure everything. There are many resources for assessment. Exhaustive research on available instruments and clarity on what needs to be measured are fundamental.
- Find individuals with different skills and talents in instrumentation, practice, research, etc. It is rare to find a person or group of persons with all the skills necessary to develop an assessment instrument. Bringing in outside expertise that is lacking in the group is necessary to the process.
- Be realistic about time and resources. Asking group members how much time they could reasonably contribute to the work and brainstorming available resources and contacts outside the group contributed to meeting our goal.

Next steps for the instrument:

- Two national Early Learning Opportunities grants were awarded to early care and education/Head Start programs in the state of Maine last year. Both of these incorporated the use of the Assessment and Monitoring Tool for Inclusive Early Care and Education within childcare and Head Start programs.
- Some Early Care and Education programs will use the instrument as a self-assessment tool, with or without collaboration from their local early intervention programs.
- Individual CDS sites within the state of Maine will use the instrument as one component of their assessment and monitoring process to determine community developmental therapy placement sites.
- Maine's staff development project for early care and school age child care programs, Maine Roads to Quality (MRTQ) and the Accreditation Project will use the instrument to "field test" for more integrated work across systems (ECE and ECSE).
- Further research will be conducted within the next few months to establish the reliability and validity of the instrument. Final revisions, additions will be made and then it will be published and distributed within the state and nationally.
- CCI staff will use the instrument in collaboration with early care and education programs to develop a technical assistance plan for building capacity to provide inclusive early care and education experiences for all children.

In conclusion, just as in Maine, many states across the U.S. are challenged by barriers to the provision of inclusive early childhood placements for children with special needs. This assessment tool provides both a means for identifying such placements as well as a process for planning needed improvements within these settings. The field test of *The Assessment & Monitoring Tool for Inclusive Early Care and Education* within the state of Maine has resulted in improved relationships between the early childhood and early intervention communities; a clearer /shared understanding of what constitutes a quality inclusive early childhood setting, and increased availability of inclusive developmental therapy placements. Early childhood and early intervention professionals, parents of young children with disabilities and children may benefit from the implementation of this instrument.

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CREATIVITY AND TECHNOLOGY: RECIPE FOR SUCCESSFUL INCLUSION WITH THE KITE MODEL

Project KITE (Kids Included through Technology are Enriched) is project of PACER Center. PACER Center is a nonprofit parent center in Minnesota that has many state, regional, and national projects. The Project KITE staff developed an innovative training model and replicated it at 35 sites, training 123 parents and professionals over the past eight years. It was first funded in 1994, replicated in 1997, and funded for Outreach in 1999. During the Outreach phase, the KITE model was introduced in four rural areas of Minnesota, including Duluth, Pipestone, the White Earth Indian Reservation, and Princeton. In the fall of 2001, interested teachers from around Minnesota participated in a *Training of Trainers Institute*, and are currently training teams of their own in rural areas of Minnesota.

The KITE model fosters inclusion of children with disabilities in an integrated classroom, through the use of assistive technology. The project focuses on children with disabilities, ages three through eight, from low-income and culturally diverse backgrounds. The model is effective in improving the outcomes for children in a variety of settings. The KITE model emphasizes 4 unique components: teaming, training, technical assistance and technology access. Teams of teachers and parents participate in KITE training to learn about their children with special needs, to learn about various technologies that might support inclusion of the children in school and family activities, and to integrate those technologies in natural environments. During the training sessions, KITE staff provide technical assistance related to computer hardware, software, and other technologies, as well as educational assistance for integrating the technology, through site visits to home and school. To foster inclusion of the focus child, KITE staff provide access to technology by loaning computers, software, and other devices to their homes and classrooms. Many children of various cultures and from low-income backgrounds who are classmates of the focus children also benefit.

Project KITE offers supporting materials, a guidebook, handouts, and brochures available in several languages to teach inclusion of young children with disabilities in natural settings through technology. The Minnesota trainers are given a training manual to assist them in providing the training. Curricular enhancement pieces are being developed to provide teachers and parents additional activities, for use with technology, that can be integrated into the general curriculum.

More than 1000 children have benefited from having teachers trained in the KITE Model. Hundreds of other children benefit as KITE graduates reach additional children in subsequent years. KITE graduates also help colleagues gain awareness of positive outcomes of incorporating technology in the classroom for inclusion. In addition, the KITE model increased parental involvement in the education process.

If national outreach is funded, Project KITE will replicate the effective model in new geographic locations with diverse populations, will create a new training of trainers institute to replicate the model, and will disseminate the KITE model in collaboration with lead agencies for PART C of IDEA and other early childhood stake-holders nationwide.

Goals of the KITE Project:

- To prepare early childhood IEP/IFSP team members, including family members, through teaming, training, and technical assistance to include young children with disabilities with their typical peers, and to increase technical access of children of diverse cultures useful technology and culturally appropriate services.
- To increase the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents and professionals to use technology with young children with disabilities by providing technical assistance, by producing effective resources and by disseminating pertinent information.

- To train teams of trainers from among KITE graduates and collaborating agencies to implement and evaluate the KITE model in new locations, to include young children with disabilities with their peers and to increase access of children of diverse cultures, to appropriate technology and culturally sensitive software.

Participants and Teaming

The criteria for selection of the Outreach sites was:

- The program would serve children aged 3-8 with disabilities.
- Parents and students would represent a variety of cultures and income levels.
- Professionals would be trained in developmentally appropriate practice and anti-bias curriculum.
- Professionals and parents had little or no experience with technology in their homes and classrooms and showed enthusiasm for learning.
- Classroom teachers, service providers and parents would benefit from teaming.
- Teams had a desire to use assistive technology to enhance the functional skills of the focus child.
- Teams would cooperate through an on-going evaluation.

During KITE training sessions, the three teams from each area consist of a teacher, a service provider (therapist), and the parent(s) or caregiver of a child with a disability. The training is broken down into six three-hour sessions over a five-month period. Topics include: setting up computers, use of early childhood software, selection of assistive technology, access issues, use of augmentative communication devices and symbol systems, parent/professional partnering, consideration of assistive technology on the IEP, cultural diversity, use of digital pictures, and customizing for an individual child using authoring tools/software programs. A requirement of the training model for each team is to plan an inclusive activity using technology with the focus child in the classroom. This demonstration activity is videotaped and shared at the final training session. Loaned computers and assistive technology are returned at the end of the training period.

During this poster session I will explain more about the benefits of an integrated classroom where your students with disabilities have full access to typical classroom activities through the innovative use of high and low technology tools. Students with physical or communication disabilities can interact with their peers, using technology, to fully participate in the curriculum. This model encourages participants to consider creative and practical ways to use the technology tools they already have, to enhance their established curriculum and enable full participation by all students. Come with a willingness to share successful inclusive ideas. Come excited to learn more about a creative and inclusive early childhood model that has been proven to work in both urban and rural settings.

Impacting Governmental Policy

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AVOIDING SPECIAL EDUCATION LITIGATION IN RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is an entitlement statute that is complemented by anti-discrimination statutes like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. These are two different but related types of laws that mandate how schools are to respond to the needs of children with disabilities. The entitlement and anti-discrimination laws together create the principle of dual accommodations. Entitlement programs create benefits for people with disabilities. These benefits are essentially inputs to the person to help the person respond to challenges inherent in the disability. The IDEA identifies techniques for minimizing the effect of disability and increasing the likelihood that a person can accommodate to the demands of the non-disabled world. By contrast, the anti-discrimination laws require the non-disabled world to accommodate the person who has a disability. Section 504 requires that guidelines identified to provide federal financial assistance not discriminate but rather make reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities. The ADA imposes the same obligations on a larger group of entities. Together, 504 and ADA create access and also require access based on reasonable accommodations. Together the entitlement laws and anti-discrimination laws create an interrelated net of accommodation: the person accommodates to the world and vice versa. This is a concept inherent in all civil rights law, that is, accommodations to secure equal treatment and opportunity before the law (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2000).

The literature on court decisions and compliance with IDEA in rural environments has identified several key issues that impact the ability of rural special educators to provide a free, appropriate public education to all learners with disabilities. Tate (2000) identified the unique considerations that rural schools must monitor including: funding compliance requirements, changes in the identification and evaluation of eligible students with disabilities, and qualitative standards that determine adequacy of programs and services. Since major disparities are found between the relatively modest resources in many rural school districts and their relatively better-funded urban counterparts, it is particularly helpful to monitor the interests of the rural school environments. State policy controls the flow of at least 75% of available IDEA funds to the local schools, and frequently the challenges of ensuring appropriate special education and related services can be interpreted differently from urban to rural settings. Courts have demonstrated through rulings the propensity to consider a school district's resources in making determinations of adequacy of special education services (Johnson, Elrod, Davis, & Smith, 2000).

The influence of Section 504 and the ADA has extended in substantial measure within the public schools in recent years. The primary reason for this influence is found in the fact that each of these public laws utilize a different set of definitions for disability and a different process for establishing eligibility for services (Smith, 2001; Turnbull, Wilcox, Stowe, & Umbarger, 2001). As a result, more parents and families are requesting the available protections and services that are specified under the provisions of the ADA and Section 504. Some of the protected class members that fall under the protections of these two laws, while not being addressed through IDEA, include: students with communicable diseases such as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS); students who have problems with drug and alcohol abuse; students with attention deficit disorder or attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder; students with learning disabilities who do not demonstrate a significant discrepancy between achievement

and intellectual capacity; students with specific health needs; and students with identified disabilities who have transitioned out of special education programs.

Most disputes between schools and parents of children with disabilities involve a difference in opinion regarding the extent to which children are receiving equal treatment and opportunity before the law. Since IDEA is an entitlement statute and requires proactive behaviors on the part of the school, most disputes site infractions based on IDEA. In the quarter century since passage of the initial Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, the major purpose of the current version of IDEA has shifted from simply providing access to educational services to an emphasis on providing meaningful, measurable, and accountable programs to students with disabilities (Katsiyannis, Yell, and Bradley, 2001). An increasing focus on the accountability for the results and learning of students with disabilities has dominated the educational policy environment in the new millennium with respect to special education (Giacobbe, Livers, Thayer-Smith, & Walther-Thomas, 2001).

There are six major principles contained in the language of IDEA that motivate legal techniques that assure students secure equal treatment and opportunity before the law. These six well-known principles are zero-reject; testing, classification and placement; appropriate education; least restrictive appropriate educational placement; procedural due process; and parent participation and shared decision making. These guiding principles are ensured by the requirement to develop legally correct and educationally appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for all students identified with disabilities. Drasgow, Yell, & Robinson (2001) indicate that the two components of legally correct and educationally appropriate can only be met by addressing procedural and substantive requirements of the law. When a parent requests a due process hearing, one or more of these principles allegedly has been violated.

Due process hearings are a significant expense to school districts, especially rural school districts already stretched for financial resources. Beekman (2000) found that these mounting costs can include the district's attorney's fees, the hearing officer's fees, the related cost of experts and substitute teachers; not to mention the indirect cost of lost time, emotion, and energy expend by parents and educators involved in the process. All districts, especially rural districts, seek ways to minimize the likelihood of a due process proceeding to be initiated by parents against them. At issue is, how may a rural school district avoid conditions which render them vulnerable to a due process proceeding and what models for doing so seem to be the most successful?

Method

To answer the questions, "how may a rural school district avoid conditions which render them vulnerable to a due process proceeding," and "what models for doing so seem to be the most successful," special education directors serving districts in the western and north central portions of Kansas were interviewed face-to-face. Three directors were interviewed using a semi-structured interview comprised of five questions, including: (1) How would you describe legal compliance with IDEA currently in your cooperative? (2) Describe any due process proceedings your cooperative has been involved in within the past five years. (3) Describe what you have learned by being involved in due process proceedings. (4) What steps have you taken to minimize the occurrence of due process proceedings in your cooperative? (5) Evaluate the success of the steps you have taken to insure legal compliance and avoid due process proceedings in your cooperative. Interviews were approximately 45 minutes in length and field notes were recorded during the interviews.

Results and Discussion

Field notes taken during the interviews were analyzed and themes related to the questions of how to avoid due process proceedings and successful models, were identified. According to the interviewees, the following principles and practices are helpful in creating conditions that minimize the probability of a due process proceeding.

- Teachers must know the principles of special education law, the regulations, and case law so they can grasp their role in securing equal treatment and opportunity for students in their classes who evidence disabilities. A large percentage of due process hearings are initiated due to parental impressions of teachers who are not able to verbalize their roles and responsibilities as related to the children in their classes. In most cases, parents will not directly seek to observe a teacher's competence if he/she is able to verbalize these roles and responsibilities.

Districts have been most successful in helping teachers gain this expertise via outcomes-based training using techniques such as role-playing and video taping interactions with parents in which teachers demonstrate professionalism and knowledge of the law.

- Members of the IEP team must demonstrate specific expertise related to children evidencing a range of disabilities. Most due process proceedings are initiated when parents perceive a lack of specific expertise related to the disability a child exhibits. This argues against a generalist model of teacher preparation and implies the importance of training teachers in specific intervention techniques relevant to specific disabilities. Parents often are not persuaded that generally good teaching techniques are sufficient to help their child experience equal treatment and educational opportunity.
- Special education directors and/or principals must be perceived by parents as fair-minded and genuinely invested in providing equal treatment and opportunity for children with disabilities. The majority of due process hearings are initiated when parents perceive a lack of sincerity by the administration which may be signaled by a number of behaviors, including inconsistency of services across children and families, actions that are interpreted by parents as fulfilling the letter, not the spirit of the law, and lack of consistent follow-up (i.e. telephone calls, meetings, etc.).
- Specifically related to rural school districts, if specific expertise does not exist in a rural district (e.g. as related to traumatic brain injury), parents are more likely to initiate a due process proceeding if the district fails the admit the lack of expertise or tries to create an in-district "expert" by sending an individual to several conferences or trainings. Parents prefer consultants or placements out of the district to what they perceive as an attempt by the district to adopt a less expensive alternative. Often, if "experts" are developed within the district, they are vulnerable in a due process hearing because they have not in fact had the depth of experience the parents have identified outside the district.
- Parents, especially those who are well-read and are developing their own expertise in the area in which their child exhibits a disability, are looking for data that documents substantive growth. Many due process proceedings are initiated when the data the school is using as evidence for growth is trivial in the mind of the parent. In rural districts, where expertise in the area of assessment and data analysis may be limited, well educated parents are likely to be unimpressed with data that is not handled honestly by the school or data which represents trivial gains from their perspective.

In light of the main themes voiced by directors of special education in rural parts of Kansas, there are some specific implications for other rural districts toward avoiding due process proceedings and implementing models of success as regards compliance with IDEA in rural districts. The main messages related to professional development of teachers within the district, willingness to know when outside expertise is needed, and the attitude of administrators toward parents. Teachers need to be trained to communicate with parents as regards their roles and responsibilities with children with disabilities, trained to implement specific interventions based on research, and trained to use data to evidence substantive growth. Professional development with teachers must be outcomes based so teachers can demonstrate their expertise, not just document that they have participated in professional development sessions. Further, districts must be willing to bring outside expertise in to deal with complex cases when no in-depth expertise exists within the district. In-depth expertise is not defined by parents as an in-district teacher who has attended several workshops in a specific disability area. Finally, administrators must be able to communicate sincerity and competence in consistently meeting the range of needs of children in their cooperatives. Arrogance and lack of consistent communication were cited by several parents who sought legal action against special education cooperatives. Again, administrators need professional development and training to know how to communicate attitudes and knowledge to parents.

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MAKING AN EXCEPTIONAL DIFFERENCE IN EDUCATION: A COLLABORATIVE UNIVERSITY/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP TO PRIME THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PIPELINE

Introduction

Overview

The Exceptional Difference Grant in Education (EDGE) is a collaborative project of the Special Education Program of Central Washington University and selected public school mentor teachers and special education programs in western and central Washington State. Central Washington University (CWU) is a regional institution of higher education located in central Washington State. The goal of EDGE is to provide an avenue for preservice educators and/or potential educators to explore career options in special education through: 1) initial and follow-up supportive seminar discussion and information; 2) career information on teaching in special education; 3) a university sponsored hands-on one-day visit to one or more classroom/education setting(s) that provide educational services to students with disabilities; and 4) initial connections with mentor special educators in the public schools. This paper describes the need for preservice recruitment programs, the EDGE 2001 pilot program timeline and procedures, and the follow-up feedback from participants.

The Need for Preservice Special Education Teacher Recruitment

Current special education teacher shortages exist and are forecasted to increase given projected retirement and teacher attrition rages (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001). There is both a quantity and quality demand for skilled special educators to meet a growing number of students with identified disabilities (Boe, Cook, Kauffman, & Danielson, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Indeed, the shortage of qualified, trained, and certified teachers in special education is one of the highest needs in American education (Boe, Cook, Bobbitt & Terhanian, 1998). For example, The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) (2001) reports that currently 36,700 special education teachers are needed to meet the educational needs for the current student population. Further, 9 % of special education teachers who are teaching in schools are not completely certified for their primary teaching responsibilities (CEC, 2001). Children and adolescents with identified disabilities have a critical need for caring, knowledgeable, and skilled special education teachers if they are to achieve success in school.

Preservice special education teacher preparation programs can provide the knowledge base and practical experiences to encourage prospective educators to select a career in special education. However, students interested in a special education career may abandon consideration of this career choice given the negative popular press that special education often receives. In addition, misinformation or misperceptions about teaching roles and responsibilities in special education may add to this challenging picture. An initial college experience may not introduce prospective teachers to the special education field unless it is carefully planned by higher education professionals.

In the field practicing special education teachers also send a disconcerting message by being inclined to leave the field or transfer to general education after working in this challenging field (CEC, 2001). Literature and research supports the need and value of motivating college experiences, peer mentors, and individualized support for novice teachers in maintaining interest and commitment for sustained employment in special education (Rosenberg, Griffin, Kilgore, & Carpenter, 1997; Shaughnessy & Siegel, 1997; Whittaker, 2000). One strategy through which preservice educators can address the need for special education teachers is to establish relationships

between practicing mentor teachers and prospective special educators prior to induction into the field. The EDGE project was implemented to facilitate a more positive approach to special education teacher preparation.

The EDGE 2001 Pilot Project

Project Goals

The purpose of EDGE was to stimulate interest in career opportunities in special education and provide connections with practicing mentor special educators in the field who provide quality educational programs for students with disabilities. The primary goal of the project was to recruit students into a course of study leading to either a special education endorsement or a pre-endorsement course of study in special education at a northwest university. A secondary goal was to generate networking opportunities among college special education faculty, preservice teachers, and practicing special educators. A third related goal was to increase the pool of qualified, certified, skilled educators providing services to students with exceptionalities in the public schools. A description of the program is provided in Table 1.

In order to address the project goals a three-phase approach was implemented. This included an introductory seminar to introduce interested university students to the EDGE program, to special education faculty and some participating mentor teachers, and to discuss teaching opportunities in special education. The approach included a full-day university sponsored visit to the classrooms or programs serviced by practicing special educators in the selected school districts Finally a follow-up seminar was conducted to gather feedback on the visits, respond to university student questions, and provide university related information on majoring and minoring in special education. Certification information was also provided.

Target Population

The target population for EDGE 2001 consisted of the undergraduate student body at CWU. This included students who had either not declared a major or minor area of study or who were considering a change of a major or minor course of study. It also included students who had a prior degree and who were considering a career in special education. Participating EDGE students committed to introductory and follow-up visitation seminars, a full day of contact in the public schools and follow-up contact with the mentor teacher(s). Thirteen university students participated in the pilot project.

A second target population consisted of practicing special education teachers in the public schools who volunteered as mentors for the project. This included mentor teachers providing services across educational service delivery models, age levels, and geographic locations, inclusive of urban and rural settings. These individuals committed to participation or information sharing in the introductory and follow-up seminars, hosting a 1-2 hour visitation in their classroom/service delivery setting for the university students, and follow-up contact with the university students. Twenty-nine mentor teachers in five school districts participated in the pilot project.

Project Timeline and Planning Framework

Five university faculty members participated in the EDGE project planning from November 2000 through March 2001 prior to the scheduled seminars and school site visits in April 2001. During this time, a number of activities occurred. Initially, five school districts were targeted for inclusion in EDGE. Next, special education administrators were contacted by special education faculty to determine interest in the project. All five school districts responded with interest and enthusiasm for the project and agreed to have their interested special education faculty participate in EDGE.

A method for selecting mentor teachers and project applicants was determined by the participating college special education faculty consisting of the following procedures. University faculty suggested visiting four programs or mentor teachers. Special education administrators in the identified districts nominated potential mentor special educators within their school district for participation in the project. This varied per district with a range of four to twelve mentors identified across districts. Mentor teachers were provided with written background

information on the project including a statement of need for special education teachers and the goals and objectives of EDGE. Targeted mentor teachers agreed to allow scheduled visits to their classrooms as well as committing to future contact with the university students afterwards. Mentor teachers received a stipend for participation ($300.00 available for stipends for each school district), a project T-shirt, and a certificate of recognition.

To enlist university student applicants a publicity and application process was established. This included print and electronic announcements in various education programs and classes and in campus-wide freshman advising courses. Additionally, posters describing the program were placed in a number of campus locations. Finally, an information booth was provided in the student commons describing the project and providing application forms during the first week of the spring quarter. Applications were made available from late February through mid April 2001. Interested university students agreed to participate in introductory and follow-up seminars as well as the full-day university sponsored school special education site visits with one of the special education faculty members. University students were provided with a small stipend for participation ($25.00 each), a project T-shirt, and a certificate of recognition. During the pilot year all students returning a completed application package were selected for participation in the project.

Also during this period various logistical details were planned for the seminars and school visits. These included ascertaining school district visitation procedures, arranging dates to visit each participating district, planning seminars, securing university transportation and support for the full day school visits, and designing a project logo and T-shirts. A contest was advertised across education classes to develop a logo for the EDGE program.

EDGE Seminars and School Site Visits

Introductory seminar. A two hour pre-visit seminar involving EDGE student participants, interested mentor teachers and special education directors, and special education faculty members was held approximately two weeks prior to the scheduled school site visits in April 2001. The seminar was transmitted via distance education to interested school districts. The purpose of this 2 hour seminar was to provide university students with: 1) background information on supply and demand in special education, 2) career information and experiences on teaching in special education, 3) site visit expectations and schedules, and 4) meet and ask initial questions and gain expectations from participating mentor teachers.

School site visits. Site visits in five participating school visits were planned. Participating school districts were located outside the area in which the regional university is located. Visits were scheduled for the last two weeks of April 2001. For each location, one university faculty member provided transportation, participated in, and acted as a liaison with each of the participating districts and mentor teachers. Site visits occurred in five school districts. Each visitation schedule was designed by the school district special education administrator and consisted of visits with four or more mentor teachers with classrooms providing elementary and secondary programs. Participating students indicated their interests during the planning phase. To the extent possible student interests were matched with the types of programs that were offered by the school districts. Various levels of interaction with the teacher and public school students receiving special education services occurred depending on the district procedures, settings observed, and mentor teacher preference.

Post-visit seminar. A one-hour post-visit seminar involving EDGE student participants, interested mentor teachers and special education directors, and special education faculty was held approximately one week following the school site visits. The purpose of this post-visit seminar was to: 1) debrief and answer questions regarding the school site visits and careers in special education, 2) provide information regarding major/minor options in special education leading to a special education endorsement or pre endorsement, 3) provide means, suggestions, and guidelines for student participants to continue contact with their identified mentor teachers, 4) evaluate effectiveness of the EDGE experience by gathering feedback from participants and 5) provide recognition awards to student, mentor teacher, and special education directors who participated in the seminar. The post-visit seminar was scheduled on a Saturday at the university during a conference for pre-service and in-service educators sponsored by a special education student organization at the university. Students, mentor teachers and special education administrators were also invited to participate in conference sessions and a no cost luncheon. During the pilot year

there were no participating mentor teachers or special education mentor teachers who were able to participate in the post–visit seminar.

Pilot Program Data

Survey data were collected from university student participants at the post-seminar. Twelve of the thirteen students completed surveys. Additionally, surveys were mailed to all participating mentor teachers and special education administrators during the summer following the project. Postage paid return envelopes were provided to mentor teachers and administrators. Three of the five special education administrators and sixteen of the twenty-nine mentors also returned the surveys.

From this data pool, 100% of the special education directors, mentor teachers, and university students recommended continuing EDGE in future academic years, thus, underscoring the importance accorded this recruitment venture by all role groups. For example, one administrator stated, "We need to do more of these kinds of activities to make sure the candidates we recruit to education understand what they are getting into and can make informed choices for a professional commitment." This administrator's comment was supported by mentor teachers. For example, one teacher observed, "This opportunity allows students to see a typical special education classroom. Some may decide it is exactly a fit for them." Another commented, "It was good to see the students and to get a feel for what prospective teachers are looking for. Include me again." Students too were also very positive in their support and feedback on the pilot program. This included observations on the diversity of special education teaching opportunities. One student noted, "The great diversity of special education classrooms really showed a broad range of learning types, abilities, teacher responsibilities, and the basic classroom setting. Great hands-on experience."

Impact on career choices by students was evident. With 66% of the students indicating that the visits and EDGE experience influenced decisions to major or minor in special education, it could be concluded that EDGE involvement made an impact. As one student declared, "Oh yes. I wanted to do something different than teaching a general education class, and I found it." Another, "The visit helped reinforce my decision to major in special education. There are so many opportunities in special education, and I really believe after interacting with the students that there will be many rewards in working with students with disabilities."

Summary and Discussion

Based on the comments by all involved role groups, the EDGE pilot project was validated as a successful program to inform and involve potential and practicing special educators about the value, rewards, and opportunities in the field of special education. The provision of additional qualified, certified, skilled, and motivated teachers to the special education teaching pool ultimately affects the K-12 students receiving special education services in our state. To provide the best possible learning opportunities for students with special needs, the field needs to enlist teachers who are prepared and committed to delivering these experiences. Preservice preparation programs should provide vicarious career exploration options to university students who may have a potential interest in teaching. Initial results of the EDGE program suggests that systematic exposure to special education experiences can avail college students of opportunities that will increase interest in pursuing a teaching degree in special education.

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Table 1

Central Washington University Special Education Program
Making an Exceptional Difference in Education (E.D.G.E.) Grant
Project Description

The Making an Exceptional Difference in Education Grant (E.D.G.E.) is a project designed to recruit potential special educators. E.D.G.E. will provide up to twenty C.W.U. college students who have not declared either a major or minor or have an interest in teaching special education exposure to the possibilities of teaching students with special need. By providing a hands-on full day guided experience in classrooms providing special education services and by utilizing pre and post seminars for information, we hope to increase interest and commitment to teaching students with exceptionalities. The C.W.U. students will have the opportunity to meet and maintain contact with mentor teachers at each of the sites. Given a high demand and need for qualified, trained teachers in special education and the quality teacher preparation program in special education at C.W.U., E.D.G.E. can contribute by increasing the pool of knowledgeable and skilled special educators.

C.W.U. students participating in the program will receive a project T-shirt, participate in a pre-seminar (April ____ from 3:30-6:30 p.m.), participate in a full-day university-sponsored classroom visitations the week of _____, and participate in a post-seminar (April_____ from ____ to _____). Upon completion of the project students will also receive a $25.00 stipend. A C.W.U. special education faculty member will sponsor the classroom visits and transportation will be provided. Students participating in the project will also have the opportunity to meet mentor teachers during the classroom visits and seminars. The application and selection of candidates occurs during March. Applications can be obtained in _____ and are due by _____ on March _____.

E.D.G.E. is an exciting opportunity to explore a career option in teaching that is rewarding and makes a difference! If you would like more information about the project please contact:

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CURRICULUM REFORM FOR INCLUSION: INFUSING ISSUES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CARING

The passage of PL 94-142 in 1975 followed by the reauthorizations in 1990 and 1997, has led to mandated inclusion of students with disabilities into schools. The types of inclusion are as varied as are the results of its implementation. Most interpretations however, attach inclusion onto the existing school structure. That is, students with disabilities are integrated into existing general education classes using various techniques and personnel. An analogy that may be effective here compares inclusion to approaches used in sewing or fabric construction. Inclusion is often overlaid upon the existing fabric of the school and attached in a variety of ways. This approach which affixes programs, students and even teachers to the existing structure could be compared to the applique technique in sewing which attaches distinct fabric shapes or designs on top of a preexisting and complete fabric surface. In some instances the inclusion program appears to mesh more closely with the existing school programs and may even become part of a kaleidoscope in what might appear to be a quilt of programs, students, and personnel. Few programs however, have succeeded in interweaving or infusing inclusion into the tapestry of the school. A tapestry seems a fitting analogy here since the many diverse threads in this fabric are so tightly woven together to form a whole that their individual uniqueness, while essential to the whole, does not stand out or distinguish them. This presentation will present some ideas about how the inclusion of students with disabilities might be infused or woven into a school's tapestry. Before the specifics can be addressed however, it is important that some background on my research based and philosophical journey is addressed since this will provide a critical foundation for the discussion to follow.

In brief, my interest in this topic began with my doctoral dissertation that explored teen attitudes toward individuals with mental retardation (Krajewski, 1987) and expanded with continued research in this area (see Krajewski & Flaherty, 2000; Krajewski & Hyde, 2000; Krajewski, Hyde, & O'Keeffe, in press). The latest examination of research data focused on differences in attitudes by gender.

The impact of gender on attitudes has long been a consideration in attitudinal research with a substantial number of studies reporting that females maintain more positive attitudes toward individuals with disabilities (Fisher, Pumpian, & Sax, 1998; Krajewski & Flaherty, 1998; Krajewski & Hyde, 2000; Krajewski, et al., in press; Eichinger, Rizzo & Sirotnik, 1991; McQuilkin, Freitag, & Harris, 1990). Typically research reports this more positive gender difference and the variable is not further investigated. A few studies examining the effect of gender beyond this cursory review have broadened the knowledge base by suggesting that girls in early grades exhibit parenting behaviors toward their peers who have disabilities (Evans, Salisbury, Palombaro, Berryman, & Hollowood, 1992) and that girls may be influenced to participate in some inclusionary programs as a means to receive more adult attention (Kishi & Meyer, 1994). Male attitudes seem to be unexplored in attitudinal research. Two studies have specifically explored male attitudes and their relevance to individuals with disabilities. In a comparison of teen attitudes toward individuals with mental retardation from 1987 to 1998, Krajewski, et al. (in press), reported differences between males and females relative to certain dimensions of attitudes with males remaining both more negative than females and virtually unchanged over the 11 year time span. Kishi and Meyer (1994) reported that male high school students who had earlier participated in an elementary school "special friends" program were "more likely to be high status boys who were more accepting of themselves, more secure, more assertive, and more affiliative toward teachers in comparison to most boys and to the girl participants" (pp. 286).

The lack of research in this area suggests a major void. In light of the inclusion movement and concern for the transition and integration of all individuals with disabilities into society, further exploration of gender differences relative to attitude, may suggest future, more successful approaches relative to both school reform and public policy. Such information may suggest changes in curriculum, teaching strategies, and/or approaches to effect attitude change and hopefully impact behavior. Attitudinal differences evident within the secondary population seem of particular importance. Secondary students, soon to become the neighbors, future employers and/associates of individuals with disabilities will also become part of the voting constituency impacting public policy. Their

views and attitudes offer insight into not only the success of school programs and curriculum, but into the future of individuals with disabilities in our society as well. Fortunately, research focusing on the secondary population has increased recently (Donaldson, Helmstetter, Donaldson, & West, 1994; Fisher, 1999; Jorgensen, 1998; Krajewski & Hyde, 2000; Krajewski, et al., in press; Hendrickson, Shokoohi-Yekta; Hamre-Nietupski; & Gable, 1996; Hughes, Rodi, Lorden, Pitkin, Derer, Hwang, & Cai, 1999).

While there is a paucity of research related to gender differences within the attitudinal literature, exploration of the topic in other disciplines is more productive. A large portion of work related to gender differences extends from the theories of Lawrence Kohlberg (1984) and Carol Gilligan (1977). Kohlberg's theory, the ethic of justice, was developed based on interviews with males and establishes stages of moral development. Gilligan challenged Kohlberg's theory, citing the exclusive use of males in his study sample. She interviewed females about moral dilemmas and suggested that women approach such problems with a "different voice", one she calls the ethic of care. Expanding on the earlier work, Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) determined that men and women use both orientations, but that females are more likely to focus on the care orientation when thinking about real-life moral dilemmas, while males are more likely to focus on the justice orientation. Both Kohlberg and Gilligan have differentiated care and justice by noting that care is typically practiced in the private world of family and friends while justice is best suited to the public world of politics and work. While it is acknowledged that the Kohlberg and Gilligan theories and work have engendered substantial debate and criticism (Brabeck, 1983; Killen, 1996; Pratt, Golding, Hunter, & Sampson, 1988; Skoe & Diessner, 1994), their work suggests connections to issues related to inclusion. Certainly it seems that differences in attitudes toward individuals with disabilities relate to educational reform and inclusion specifically.

A large amount of literature related to increasing positive attitudes toward individuals with disabilities and improving inclusion, includes terms consistent with the Kohlberg and Gilligan literature. Some literature explores the general relationship of social justice to inclusion (Christensen & Dorn, 1997; Gerrard, 1994), while other literature explores its relationship to the classroom (Evans, et al., 1994), or relates it to curriculum (Fisher, Sax, & Pumpian, 1997). Within the special education literature inclusion as a strategy leading to the eventual creation of caring communities is clear (Sapon-Shevin, 1990; Stainbeck & Stainbeck, 1990). Helmstetter, Peck and Giangreco (1994) suggest that integration offers the opportunity for students without disabilities to develop "an ethic of caring and commitment to others" while Kishi and Meyer (1994) caution about the possible limitations of care giving in establishing meaningful relationships between students with severe disabilities and their peers.

Since the connection between inclusion and the concepts of social justice and caring is apparent, the focus point becomes "How can these concepts be infused into the schools curriculum?" It is important at this point to reflect on the analogy established in the introduction that compared inclusion and its implementation to the sewing and/or weaving techniques of applique, quilting, and tapestry. One example of a curriculum modification designed to improve the acceptance of, and presumably the inclusion of individuals with disability, is reported by Donaldson, et al., (1994). This study measured attitudes and level of interaction of general education high school students with students with disabilities following the implementation of a social studies unit of study which focused on developing awareness, understanding, sensitivity, acceptance, and interaction with peers with disabilities. While the activities in the unit clearly included issues that could be related to social justice and caring, the unit itself was added or appliqued and not woven into or infused throughout the curriculum or the school. Contrast this with the reform that Fisher (1999) describes in which the curriculum reform involves school adopted and selected thematic units which link various subject areas, such as English, science, and child development. Included within the units are projects that focus on individuals with disability and their roles in society. Projects include the English Social Justice Project as well as the core reading requirement of Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, the science class project to develop an adapted seat for a student with disabilities, and focus in the child development class on the birth of child with disability. Approached in this fashion, disability becomes a thread woven throughout the curriculum and inclusion becomes a part of the school tapestry. For other reform ideas, including those not specifically related to curriculum, see Jorgenson (1998).

While its seems that the above examples would also include an aspect of care, the connection is not specifically addressed within that literature. Care and the concept as it relates to schools and education, is discussed by several authors in one of the definitive works on the subject, Who Cares? Theory, Research, and Educational Implications of the Ethic of Care, (Brabeck, 1989). Higgins (1989) who considers justice and care to be connected discusses the establishment of the "just community" within the school as an intervention that establishes the

indivisibility of the two. Perhaps one of the best examples of a theoretical infusion of the concepts is espoused by Noddings (1989) in her suggested broad revision of curriculum. She suggests the establishment of a new course, perhaps to be called, "People: Their Growth, Customs, and Relationships", which would include a practicum and extend across the high school years. Some topics she suggests are: the study of childhood (including related art, poetry and literature, biological and developmental psychology, and cross-cultural sociology), the study of old age including some political aspects, the study of religion and morality including political aspects, and the study of relationships including the diversity reflecting within this topic. While she does not envision the course as being interdisciplinary in the strictest sense because it stands as a class on its own and does not extend across preexisting courses, the course would focus on different topics and include aspects of various disciplines such as history, sociology, English, art, biology.

A common thread through most of the curriculum reform concepts previously described, is the focus on moral and/or character education including broader issues of justice, fairness, and human rights as part of the social studies curriculum. Discussion regarding the infusion of these topics within the social studies curriculum is apparent within the social studies related literature (Balton, 1992; Craig, Leppard, 1993; Lockwood, 1991; Tibbitts, 1996). The temptation therefore, might be to add the focus on social justice and caring to the existing social studies curriculum. This however, does not consider the broader reconceptualization of social justice and caring as natural and integral parts of all curriculum areas. There is another challenge however.

While the Kohlberg and Gilligan work focuses on the gender differences relative to either social justice or caring, other literature focusing on these concepts and their connections to the schools and/or curriculum, does not consider the possible relative gender differences. The synthesis of the two presents an intriguing question. If the school curriculum is refocused to challenge students to explore issues related to social justice and caring (with one important outcome being a more sensitive view of those with disabilities), would different approaches, designed with consideration of the gender differences, produce more favorable results? Certainly this question suggests the need for further research in this area.

It is apparent that professionals in a number of fields including psychology, philosophy, sociology are focused on issues that relate to inclusion. Professionals within the field of education could benefit from extending their views beyond the myopic view of inclusion necessitated by the legal mandates. As is evident in the field of education all too often, approaches are reactionary and thorough exploration of the new idea, theory or strategy is often conducted through hindsight. This focus on the trees instead of the forest excludes not only the valuable voices and views of other professionals, but ignores the creative answers and solutions available within the field itself. Infusing issues of social justice and caring into the curriculum can be a powerful reform movement to prepare all students for a diverse world.

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DEVELOPING A PEER TUTOR TRAINING PROGRAM THAT FITS YOUR LOCAL NEEDS

"This district hired you to get those kids into the real classrooms. It doesn't really matter where you put them, as long as they don't cause trouble and the teachers don't mind."

"Well, OK, I think I can do that. What kind of support do you have in place?"

"You mean like an aid?"

"Yah, with this many students and getting them integrated into the general classroom I know that I'm going to need some back-up, don't you agree?"

"Well, that would be nice, but the district is over budgeted as it is, there's no money for any aids. You'll just have to make do by yourself."

I had just started in a new district as a teacher in a self-contained unit for children with severe disabilities. One of my responsibilities was to integrate our students in the unit into the general classroom. Now I was being told that I had to do this without any help. At any one time in the day I could have four to five students in other classrooms as well as the students in my classroom. How was I to provide the supervision that was necessary with this population of students?

This type of a scenario occurs everyday in our public schools. Fortunately for me, I had taught in a two room rural school where our structure was much looser than in most schools. Of course all students were integrated! We didn't have a special class for anyone! We also shared some students. For different subjects some of my 3rd and 4th graders went into the 5th-8th grade room and some of the 5th and 6th graders came into my 1st-4th grade room. It was common practice for students to help students. This experience developed in me the attitude that peer tutors were an important part of teaching.

The concept of peers helping peers is as old as written accounts of education, in fact one school set up 200 years ago in India exclusively used older students as teachers (Gordon & Gordon, 1990). It is common knowledge (supported by studies) (Greenwood, Dinwiddie, Terry, Wade, Stanley, Thibadeau, & Delquardri, 1984) that those being helped by their peers can learn as well, and sometimes better, than when taught by an adult teacher. We also know that the peer helper or tutor gains both academically as well as socially by their involvement (Allen, 1976). In talking to other teachers about peer tutors, I never have had to sell the idea of using peers. Usually teachers express concern about how to handle the peer tutors, or how to find them.

Obligations

Teacher Obligations

The starting point is to determine what your obligations will be. Just as you have obligations to the school district and you have obligations to the students under your care, you will have obligations to students who work for you as peer tutors. The first obligation is to have a well thought out program. You need to know why, when, how and where you are going to use peer tutors. This requires that you determine the best placements for the students in your care. Talk to the various general education teachers and get their cooperation for a placement and the expected level of work for your student in their class. Once you know where your students will be, then you can determine what you need in the way of peer tutors.

Another obligation is to train your peer tutors. One of the major factors is the time to do the training. All the schools in which I taught had Channel One. I took a 20 minute Channel One period each week for peer tutor training. We first went over the training program that I had designed for them. Incorporated in the training program were my expectations of the peer tutors, typical characteristics of children with severe disabilities, and expectations

of the job. Once the initial training was complete, and I was convinced that all of my peer tutors had a good grasp of the basics, we concentrated on current challenges they were facing. These included things like specific knowledge and skills in working with their charges, handling bullies in school, and how to be diplomatic with difficult teachers. When recruiting the peer tutors I promised them and their parents that the training program would be equivalent to an introduction to high school Psychology 101 with special emphasis on applied behavior analysis.

It is important that you hold your peer tutors to a standard of knowledge and skills. They should realize that they know things and can do things that other students in the school will not know or be able to do. This builds esprit de corps in your peer tutors and you will find it easier to recruit new peer tutors later.

You are also obligated to support your peer tutors. In practical terms this means that you give them the guidance they need and back them up in front of the administration, other teachers, and other students.

Finally, you are obligated to making working for you fun and rewarding. Remember, you chose your career. Teaching children, especially those with special needs, is not always easy and in fact is often difficult and punishing enough to make even the most dedicated teacher think about quitting. Your peer tutors volunteered to help you. They are not getting paid (although they may be getting school credit). You need to make their time with you worth their while. Build in small, weekly rewards for your peer tutors. Also make sure that there are some larger rewards. I always allowed all of my peer tutors (on a rotating basis) to come with me on field trips. The final trip each semester was a super-duper all day long trip and all peer tutors came on it. Of course the peer tutors were working on these trips, but I tried to make sure that they enjoyed their work.

Student Obligation

During recruitment, training, and throughout the semester you need to emphasize that your peer tutors needed to be loyal to you, the students in their care, and their job. One of the things required is a strong commitment to the privacy of their assigned student. It also means that they had to defend any of your students from school bullies. Trustworthiness and dependability are expected behaviors.

Recruitment

So how do you find these paragons of virtue? More importantly, how do you find students who will be good peer tutors? It isn't that difficult, even beginning at a new school, to find students who would make good peer tutors.

Personal contacts

The first place that teachers should look for potential peer tutors is among the students they already know. Every teacher knows of students who would like nothing better than to work with that teacher all day, every day. These students are predisposed to helping the teacher. Many of these students may work well as peer tutors. Start your list of potential peer tutors with the students you already know.

Referrals from the school office

You may be a first year teacher or have just moved to a school and don't have the luxury of knowing many of the students at that school. I found it very helpful to talk to the secretaries in the school office. Secretaries get to see all the students who pass their desks. They know those students who are troublemakers, those who have been labeled troublemakers, those who are dependable and good workers, and those who are the "brown nosers". Ask the secretaries who they think would make good peer tutors for your students. You can also ask the principal and assistant principal, but I doubt that you will learn anything more than what a good secretary will tell you. Another benefit of seeking the secretaries' counsel is that you can never have too much good will from secretaries, custodians, or cooks.

Referrals from the councilor

The school councilor is another good source of information about possible peer tutors. This person has a general "feel" for the entire student body. He or she probably has already instituted some type of program that uses students in various helping roles. Explain to the councilor what you have in mind and the qualities that you want in the student. I've gotten quite a few referrals from councilors.

Personal recruitment

As a new teacher in a school I've found that the largest single means of getting names on a list of potential peer tutors is to do personal recruitment. I have made posters for the hallways that show Uncle Sam (with my face) pointing to the audience stating, "I want you". I've made a series of announcements over the intercom. These are always lively and upbeat, often playing the Village People's "I want you as a new recruit" song in the background. I've passed out flyers in the hallway and enlisted friendly students to do the same. The common theme in all my recruitment methods is humor and vitality. I portrayed the job as being exciting and important. I did this because I'm firmly convinced that our young people are looking for meaning in their lives and that serving others is one of the most meaningful things that any of us can do.

Selection

So now you have a list of candidates for the job of peer tutor. It's important for several reasons that you sort out the students in the list. First, you probably don't have room for all of the students who want to be in your program. Second, not all of them would be good peer tutors. Finally, the students in your school need to be convinced that working for you is something for which they need to strive – not everyone can be your peer tutor.

There are several steps in sorting the list of students that you have compiled and the first step has nothing to do with the students or their qualifications. Before you select any students for your peer tutor program you have to know the personal qualities you seek in a peer tutor, what you expect of them, and what they can expect of you. Working with anyone is a two way street. Both sides must see that they are gaining something or the relationship will falter and fail. I always expected a lot from my peer workers but I also built in lots of rewards for them.

In the second step you decide on the qualities that your peer tutors need; things like perseverance, higher order thinking, leadership, and willingness to stand firm against the odds (they will need this if you expect them to champion their charges to other students). A lot of teachers look at the list of desired personal qualities and automatically think of those students who are getting high academic scores and are in leadership positions in student organizations. Obviously, these students can be a source of good peer tutors, but don't forget that the qualities you need are also present in those students who are known as troublemakers. It takes real perseverance to keep coming to school when you know that you will probably get in trouble that day. Planning mischief requires higher order thinking skills. Being the person who instigates new means of tormenting the administration requires real leadership. Consistency in holding to a course, even a misguided one, demonstrates the tenacity that you need in your peer tutors. Some of my best peer tutors have been students who were getting Cs and Ds. Often they were the kids on the "outside", not part of any organized school group. In fact one of my best peer tutors started as my worst nightmare.

One of my students, "John", was a real trial, for me as well as for the entire school. His behavior at times was nothing less than bizarre. One of his favorite activities was to abuse a student until the student would physically strike him and then "John" would scream a report to the nearest teacher accusing the other student of abuse. As it happened "Ted" was one of "John's" favorite targets. "Ted" didn't like school, often didn't come to school; was unkempt, greasy, smelly, and in general didn't have any friends outside the "doper" circle. After one incident between "John" and "Ted" the principal wrote up a behavior contract for "Ted" stating that the next incident of fighting would result in "Ted's" arrest by the community police. Out of the blue, the principal asked me, in front of "Ted", if I needed any more peer tutors. Well, I did, but I needed someone who would work with "John". To make a long story short, "Ted" agreed to work as a peer tutor with "John"; "John" agreed to give "Ted" a try; and "Ted" agreed to defend "John" against school bullies and to teach "John" how to get attention in a more appropriate manner. By the end of the first week "John" was loudly proclaiming that "Ted" was the best friend that he had ever had. "John's" behavior improved. "Ted's" behavior improved, and there was no need to call the police.

The next step in your sorting process is to interview each student on the potential peer tutor list. The interview should be short and you only need to ask them a few questions (see Appendix A). The point of the interview is to get to know the students better and gain a bit of an idea of how they might fit into your program. When you are done with the interview give the student a rating. You will use this rating later in the sorting process.

Remember, the point of sorting through the list of potential peer tutors you have compiled is to come up with a list of students who will work well with your students. You should be looking for students as peer tutors who have the qualities needed to work in difficult situations, both with their peers and with teachers. Don't discard a

student just because he or she is not recognized by the administration as a star pupil. Often you will find a diamond buried beneath a layer of coal dust.

Finally, once you have a tentative list of possible peer tutors, develop an evaluatory checklist (see Appendix B). Give the checklist of possible choices to the councilor and asked that the councilor rate each student. Then choose a few students whom you know well and asked them to do the same. After collecting all the forms, average the councilor and students' ratings with your ratings (see Appendix C) and list the students by their composite score. You now had a list of students in descending order based on how well they qualified according to the opinion of several people. By having the councilor, a few trusted students, and yourself rate each potential peer tutor you are able to get a broader insight than if you had done all the rating yourself. Your initial choices for peer tutors come from this ordered list of potential candidates.

Monitoring

In the general classroom

At this point you now have chosen students to be peer tutors and you have trained them in their jobs. For some it will mean working in your classroom with you, for others it will require that they go to a general classroom with one of your students. It is important that you be able to trust your peer tutors in situations that are outside your control. This means that you must monitor their actions as well as the actions of your students in their care. I found that a simple form could do both of these things (see Appendix D). Develop a short form that will allow you to identify the student, peer tutor, teacher, class, and date. This form should also have a simple checklist of what is expected of your student. The peer tutor is in charge of keeping track of those behaviors. By keeping everything simple, you can keep up to date and it won't be too difficult or confusing for your peer tutors. However, I found that I needed one more item on my forms.

One day the health teacher walked into my room. "I want that kid out of my classroom! He doesn't belong there, he's retarded! Taking care of him is your job, that's what you were hired to do, not me! I don't care what you do with him but get him out." With those departing words the health teacher turn around and walked out of my room. I was still sitting on the edge of my chair; I hadn't enough time to even stand up. As I later analyzed the situation, I discovered that I hadn't kept in close enough contact with the teacher. So, I added to my monitoring form. Now the peer tutor was required to get the teacher's initials each day and the teacher was prompted to indicate either yes or no if he or she wanted me to contact them. After making this change it was much easier to stop problems before they started.

Peer Tutor school behavior

Although academic performance of your peer tutors in their other classes should not be a priority for them to work with you in your program, you need to keep informed of their behavior in school. These young people represent you and your program to administrators, other students, and parents. If you take the misguided notion that you don't have to keep track of their school behavior, sooner or later you will find that one of them has put all your work into jeopardy. One way to keep informed is to have a weekly report that each peer tutor turns in to you. It needs to be simple, something that doesn't take any real effort on the part of the peer tutor, something that gives you information from their other teachers, and something that you can review quickly. Appendix E is the form that I used. Each of my peer tutors took the checklist to each of their teachers. Notice that I did not ask any questions about the peer tutor's grades. His or her grade in other classes was not important to me, but how he or she behaved was important. You need to determine what your priorities are in this area. No matter what you track, you need to have this information at your fingertips when someone (usually the administration) comes to you with a charge against one of your peer tutors. It is always better to head off possible problems rather than having to spend time and energy on trying to solve one.

Conclusion

Obviously there is a lot more to designing, implementing and monitoring a peer tutor program than what I have been able to give you. However, these are some of the basics. If you follow these steps, pay attention to your students and peer tutors, and keep good records, you will find that providing the support for your students in the general classroom isn't as difficult as it seemed at first.

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Appendixes

Appendix A

Name:_____

Why do you want to be a peer tutor?

_____

_____

Have you ever worked with someone who has a disability? Yes No

What type of disability was it?

_____

Why should I pick you instead of someone else?

_____

Rating 5 = excellent, 4 = great, 3 = good, 2 = OK, 1 = poor

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Appendix B

Peer tutor possibilities
5 = excellent, 4 = great, 3 = good, 2 = OK, 1 = poor

Student Name ☐

Student Name ☐

Student Name ☐

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Appendix C

Peer tutor possibilities
5 = excellent, 4 = great, 3 = good, 2 = OK, 1 = poor

	Counselor Recommend	Student Recommend	Interview Score	Average
Name	_____	_____	_____	_____
Name	_____	_____	_____	_____
Name	_____	_____	_____	_____

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Appendix D

Checklist – Student/Outside

Class Period: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (circle one)

Date: _____ Subject: _____

Student Initials: _____ Peer Tutor: _____

Yes	No	
_____	_____	On time
_____	_____	Prepared
_____	_____	Listens to instructions
_____	_____	Follows directions
_____	_____	Begins activity when instructed
_____	_____	Spends most of time on task
_____	_____	Works at consistent pace
_____	_____	Tries before asking questions
_____	_____	Show respect for teacher
_____	_____	Considers others feelings
_____	_____	Language usage/voice level is appropriate
_____	_____	Good attitude

Total Yeses _____

Teacher initials: _____ Do you want the SpEd teacher to contact you? Yes No

Comments:

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Appendix E

Peer Tutor Weekly Checklist

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Dear Teacher,

This student is one of my peer tutors and works with me in the Life Skills classroom. Since modeling appropriate behavior is one of the most important things that teachers or peer tutors do, I require my peer tutors to be current on all of their assignments with all of their teachers. Every week my peer tutors must certify that they are turning in their assignments. I would appreciate it if you would sign this form and indicate the current state for this student. I would also appreciate any thoughts you have concerning this student's classroom behavior.

Mr. G Gilberts

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Period (circle one)

Teacher Signature: _____

Y	N		Comments
___	___	Assignments up to date.	_____
___	___	On time to class	_____
___	___	Prepared for class	_____
		Respect/cooperate with teacher	
___	___	Listens to instructions	_____
___	___	Begins activity when instructed	_____
___	___	Spends most of time on task	_____
___	___	Shows respect for teacher	_____
		Respect/cooperate with other students	
___	___	Considers others feelings	_____
___	___	Works well with others	_____
___	___	Appropriate language	_____

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DO FEDERAL MANDATES LEAVE RURAL STUDENTS BEHIND? SUGGESTIONS FOR PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL STATES

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA) included significant changes in the assessment of and educational programming for students with special needs. First, they mandated the participation of students with disabilities in state and district-wide assessment programs with appropriate accommodations and modifications when necessary. Second, IDEA required that the state or local district develop and conduct an alternate assessment for those students who could not participate in large-scale assessments. Third, individual education planning (IEP) teams must provide positive behavior interventions and supports based on functional behavioral assessment to students with disabilities whose behavior impedes their learning or the learning of others. In order to meet the requirements of these mandates, states, school districts, and institutes of higher education must ensure that preservice and inservice personnel are appropriately trained.

Along with these mandates is the continuing challenge in education to improve the translation and use of research findings for educators, policy makers, and other stakeholders into practice (Carnine, 1997; Gersten & Brengelmann, 1996). Research on this issue suggests that research findings seldom find their way into classroom practice and are implemented poorly even when they do (Cuban, 1990). Even less frequently do innovative best practices become institutionalized (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Fullan, 1991; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1998). Sustained use of research-proven practices occurs only sporadically even with wide dissemination, training, and support (Carnine, 1997; Fullan, 1991; Gersten & Brengelman, 1996; Malouf & Schiller, 1995, Vaughn, Klingner, & Hughes, 2000). Simply mandating a best practice is insufficient. Teachers must also receive training and ongoing support in the best practice to carry out the federal mandate (Guskey, 1995; Guskey & Sparks, 1996). This presents a challenging task for all states especially those with large rural populations

Rural school districts face stifling road blocks that include a limited tax base for needed revenues, a need to deliver service over a wide geographic area, inadequate facilities, limited related services providers, high transportation costs, and a lack of access to effective staff development (Knapczyk, Rodes, & Brush, 1994; Helge, 1992; Howley, 1991) when attempting to implement federally mandated changes. These daunting challenges restrict the implementation of strategic changes such as inclusive education for students with disabilities and behavior problems in rural school districts. In light of this, we have begun to research a model to guide the development and delivery of ongoing professional development in rural states by administrators, staff developers, and practitioners.

The development of this model is fueled by teachers' increasing concern about inadequate preparation on federally mandated procedures, the lack of sustained implementation of research-based practices (Gersten et al, 1997) and rural schools' lack of access to trained specialists (Ludlow, 1998). In our research the professional development initiatives studied focus on the development individualized proactive behavior intervention plans based on a functional assessment of behavior (Yell & Shriner, 1998) and alternate assessment procedures for students with severe disabilities. Through this research we have developed an index for assessing factors that promote adoption of the above initiatives. We have also developed a list of recommendations for identifying best training practices for individual settings. By researching the application of this model in rural settings it is expected that the replication of this process in other rural school districts will also inform their practice. This model of staff development builds capacity within the school building, helps build partnerships with other agencies and stakeholders, demystifies and streamlines the assessment process, links professional development to student outcomes thereby leaving no student behind.

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FACILIATING ADOLESCENTS WITH DISABILITIES UNDERSTANDING OF AREA AND PERIMETER CONCEPTS VIA MANIPULATIVE INSTRUCTION

Mtetwa and Garafalo (1989) found that the majority of students at the secondary level listed mathematics as their least favorite subject. Further questioning of the students revealed the following student beliefs concerning math: (a) math requires memorization and practice for success, (b) problems in computation always require formulas, (c) problems only have one correct answer, and (d) people who are considered good at math are geniuses. If this is the belief of students at the secondary level without disabilities, then students with learning disabilities in math are at a greater disadvantage in math when these prevalent attitudes are wedded with the math disability.

Reports from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1989, 1991) indicate that to function in life, students need to become capable, confident problem solvers. Both reports stress the importance of concrete experiences and materials to aid students' understanding of math skills and principles. Students as a whole must see and believe that mathematics makes sense, is useful, and understandable to them personally before mathematics will be used readily and confidently in their lives.

Manipulative materials, such as geoboards, pattern blocks, chip trading boards, counters, algebra tiles, attribute pieces, fraction bars, and Cuisenaire rods, have been employed to teach children and adolescents a variety of math concepts. These manipulative materials have been used to teach students counting, place value, word problem solving, basic computation, numeration, and equation solving skills. Mastropieri, Scruggs, and Shiah (1991) found that the use of manipulatives facilitated the acquisition of basic mathematical concepts. Mercer and Miller (1992, 1993) stated that a variety of examples and manipulative objects led to a strong conceptual knowledge base in mathematics for students with learning disabilities in math. Marsh and Cooke (1996) discovered that using manipulatives when solving math story problems greatly enhanced students' ability to identify the correct operation to solve word problems. Daniels, Hyde, and Zemelman (1993) indicated that manipulative use enables students to become knowledgeable and confident in the math ability area.

While a perusal of literature revealed that there are a vast number of articles offering excellent suggestions as to how to employ manipulative materials, empirical investigations on the affects of manipulatives on learning math concepts are limited. Most studies, even those using math manipulatives, have not included participants who have learning disabilities. In Sowell's (1989) meta analysis of manipulative math instruction evaluating the findings from 60 studies, the conclusion was reached that long term use of concrete materials as opposed to abstract instruction resulted in significantly greater gains in mathematical learning. Evaluation of the use of manipulative materials with persons classified as having learning disabilities revealed that manipulative instruction was effective in teaching place value skills (Peterson, Mercer, & O'Shea, 1988), word problem skills (Marsh & Cooke, 1996),

computation skills (Mercer & Miller, 1992; Miller, Mercer, & Dillon, 1992) and problem solving skills (Maccini & Hughes, 2000). A search of the literature failed to find any studies evaluating the impact of manipulative instruction on students with learning disabilities in the area of geometry, specifically dealing with area and perimeter concepts. Adults routinely employ the knowledge of area and perimeter to solve problems in their daily lives in such areas as buying rugs, curtains, tiles, blinds, fencing, and lumber. These types of problems easily are solved. Students are exposed to the principles of area and perimeter on a daily basis, however, when these principles are introduced in a secondary school classroom, the student's disability coupled with a fear of failure produces a stumbling block in learning resulting in confusion and frustration. Therefore, effective means must be developed to teach students with learning disabilities in math to solve area and perimeter problems for success in school and life.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the affect of manipulative instruction on the acquisition and maintenance of perimeter and area problem solving skills by students with learning disabilities in math. Specifically, the following study questions were addressed: (a) How long would the students with learning disabilities in math take to acquire skills in perimeter and area?; (b) Once the skills in area and perimeter were mastered, would the skills be maintained over time?; and (c) Would the students be able to transfer the area and perimeter skills learned through manipulatives into paper-pencil calculations?

Methodology

Participants

Three students classified as learning disabled in mathematics and attending a school in a rural area of the Central United States participated in the study: (a) Bill, a 9th grader, enrolled in Algebra, (b) Amber, a 7th grader, enrolled in pre Algebra, and (c) Bob, a 10th grader, received Geometry instruction in the resource room. Assessment via the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised, Tests of Achievement (1989) revealed that the students broad math scores and math reasoning scores were in the following percentiles respectively: (a) Bill, 11th and 27th, (b) Amber, 30th and 64th, and (c) Bob, 8th and 32nd.

Materials

Materials used in the study included three geoboards and rubber bands. Problems randomly were selected from *Geometry for Primary Grades* (Fitzgibbon, 1999), *Intermediate Geometry* (Fetty, 1999), and *Middle Grade Math: Tools for Success* (Chapin, Illingworth, Landau, Masingila, & McCracken, (1997).

Design

The design employed for this study was a multiple baseline design across people and two behaviors, perimeter and area problem solving ability (Tawney & Gast, 1984). First, Bill began instruction while Amber and Bob remained on baseline. Amber and Bob's perimeter or area behavior was probed every other day while on baseline. Second, when Bill's data indicated a trend toward acquiring the perimeter or area solving skill, then Amber began treatment. Third, Bob was exposed to treatment once Amber began acquiring the perimeter or area solving skill.

Area and perimeter problem solving skills were deemed acquired when each student correctly solved 80% or greater or the problems attempted on each of three consecutive days. Students initially were trained in solving perimeter problems and then in area problems. When students met the 80% or greater criterion for solving area and perimeter problems, training ceased and maintenance checks were performed. These checks were performed in the resource room by the students' teacher two times per week over the course of 3 weeks. The teacher individually asked each child with the aid of the geoboard to calculate the answer to five perimeter and five area problems. In addition after a 2 week Christmas break students were asked to use paper and pencil to calculate the answers to four area and four perimeter problems.

Procedure

All training in solving area and perimeter problems was conducted on a one-on-one basis in a resource room for students with learning disabilities. Training was conducted on a daily basis for 15 to 20 minutes by a teacher certified in special education. The teacher recorded the number of problems the student correctly solved, the type of errors made by the student, the length of time the student required to solve the problems, and the length of time required in the training session.

The following procedure was used to teach perimeter problem solving. In the first session only, the teacher told the student perimeter meant how far it is around your (gave examples, such as this room, your yard, etc.) and demonstrated perimeter to the student via walking all the way around the room. Then the teacher demonstrated how to make shapes on the geoboard and allowed the student to create various shapes on the board. In subsequent sessions, other activities were incorporated. First, the teacher demonstrated on the geoboard that the perimeter of shapes could be determined by counting from nail to nail (the distance from one nail to another nail is one unit). Second, a square was constructed on the board and the student placed a rubber band at the corner of the square and moved a finger around the square from nail to nail until returning to the rubber band. The student then stated how many units found in the perimeter. Second, the teacher created five random shapes on the geoboard one at a time and encouraged the student, with prompting as needed, to determine the perimeter. Third, the teacher selected two perimeter problems from one of the math books and demonstrated to the student how to solve the problems using a geoboard. The student then solved the problems with prompting as necessary. Fourth, the teacher selected two more perimeter problems from the math books and allowed the student to solve them on the geoboard with prompting as necessary. Fifth, the teacher selected three to five perimeter problems from the math books and allowed the student to solve these problems on the geoboard with no prompting. This activity served as the daily test.

The following procedure was used to teach area problem solving. In the first session only, the teacher told the student that area means how much room you have to (gave examples, such as this room, your yard, etc.) and demonstrated area to the student via counting room tiles. Second, the teacher constructed a four-by-four nail square on the geoboard and asked the student to divide the square in as many one-by-one nail squares as possible. Then the student was asked to count the squares and determine the number of square unit. Third, the teacher created five random shapes on the geoboard one at a time and encouraged the student, with prompting, to determine the area of each shape. Fourth, the teacher selected two area problems from one of the math books and demonstrated to the student how to solve the problems using a geoboard. The student then solved the problems with prompting as necessary. Fifth, the teacher selected two more area problems from the math books and allowed the student to solve them on the geoboard with prompting as necessary. Sixth, the teacher selected three to five area problems from the math books and allowed the student to solve these problems on the geoboard with no prompting. This activity served as the daily test.

Treatment fidelity was evaluated during 25% of the sessions. A classroom aide was given a list of the steps the teacher was to follow when administering treatment and was asked note whether each step was followed in the same manner for each student. Inspection of this data revealed 100% adherence to prescribed method of treatment.

Reliability of scoring student responses was evaluated by having an aide observe and score students solutions to problems during 25% of the treatment sessions. There was a 100% agreement between the teacher's and aide's scoring of students' solutions to problems.

Results and Discussion

None of the students were able to correctly solve any of the area or perimeter problems presented to them during the baseline conditions. Each term intervention was introduced for area as well perimeter problem solving there was a marked increase in problem solving ability. Bill reached performance criterion (80% or greater problems solved correctly on 3 or more consecutive days) in perimeter problem solving after 6 days and in area problem solving after 5 days. Amber required 7 days to reach criterion in perimeter problem solving, and 5 days to attain criterion in area problem solving. Bob became proficient in perimeter problem solving in 5 days and in area problem solving in 5 days.

Maintenance checks performed twice per week in each of 3 consecutive weeks following treatment revealed that all students solved all area and perimeter problems given correctly when using the geoboard. Immediately following Christmas vacation, Bill, Amber, and Bob were given four area and four perimeter problems and asked to solve them using only paper and pencil. Their scores were 100%, 90%, and 90% respectively.

Clearly, the treatment resulted in a fairly rapid acquisition and maintenance of basic perimeter and area problem solving skills. Also, the training appears to have resulted in transfer of skills learned to paper and pencil problem solving solutions. These results are in accord with previous findings in the field that indicate that concrete manipulatives facilitate acquisition of various math skills (Marsh & Cooke, 1996; Mercer, & Miller, 1992; Sowell,

1989). They extend previous findings by revealing that use of concrete manipulatives promotes the maintenance of skills.

The success the students demonstrated could be attributed to any of a number of factors. These include their teacher's level of enthusiasm and skill in delivering instruction, the use of fairly simple area and perimeter problems that involved no angles and/or irregular shapes, or the concrete depiction of the concepts of area and perimeter.

One limitation of this study is that a test of generalization was not employed. Would the students be able to perform area and perimeter problem solving skills in their general education classrooms in group settings with limited teacher supervision? Another limitation involves the type of problems given, none contained angles because geoboard instruction does not allow for such representations. However, in real life, angles must be taken into consideration when solving area and perimeter problems. Therefore, future researchers need to examine means to effectively promote generalization of area and perimeter problem solving skills and ways to incorporate angles into manipulative instruction. Manipulative instruction as employed in this study does appear to be an effective strategy for learning and both the students and teacher enjoyed using the materials.

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HOW CAN WE KEEP OUR GOOD TEACHERS?

Teacher education programs are joining with school districts to train future teachers for a challenging and diverse teaching experience. First year teachers enter the classroom with new skills, high expectations, and great dreams. This is a good start, but it is often not enough. Too often we send our new teachers into their first year without the support necessary to assure their success. One positive way to support our new teachers is to provide them with a mentoring system.

The state of Arkansas has implemented such a mentoring program. They have adopted the Pathwise Mentoring Program. As of 2002, every first year teacher in Arkansas will have a mentor who uses the Pathwise program. This program addresses many of the important areas a first year teacher needs to achieve to be successful. These areas are addressed in the following four domains. 1. Organizing content knowledge for student learning, 2. Creating an environment for student learning, 3. Teaching for student learning, 4. Teacher professionalism. It also gives that first year teacher the emotional support necessary not only to survive the first year of teaching, but also to thrive there.

Each first year teacher will have a mentor that is trained in the Pathwise mentoring program. This mentor will work with the mentee teacher for one to three years, depending on the new teacher's needs. The state provides funds to pay the mentor and to pay for needed teacher development. This program is a formative evaluation system, and is not in any way to be used by the Principal or supervisor to evaluate the teacher. It is to be used to help the new teacher become stronger and to support him or her in the early teaching experiences.

The Pathwise Mentoring Program leads directly into skills necessary to achieve as a teacher. The Pathwise program also correlates directly with the Praxis III assessment. Each covers nineteen standards: 1. Becoming familiar with relevant aspects of the students background, knowledge and experiences, 2. Articulate clear learning goals that are appropriate to students, 3. Demonstrate an understanding of the connections between past, current, and future content, 4. Creating or selecting teaching materials, learning activities, and instructional materials that are appropriate to students, 5. Create or select evaluation strategies that are appropriate, 6. Create a climate of fairness, 7. Establish and maintain rapport, 8. Communicate challenging learning expectations to students, 9. Establish and maintain consistent standards of classroom behavior, 10. Making the physical environment save and conducive to learning, 11. Making learning goals and instructional procedures clear to students, 12. Making content comprehensible to students, 13.Encourage students to extend their thinking, 14. Monitoring students understanding of content through a variety of means, provide feedback, and adjust learning actives, 15. Use instructional time effectively, 16. Reflect on extent to which learning goals were met, 17. Demonstrate sense of efficacy, 18. Build professional relationships with colleagues, 19. Communicating with parents or guardians about student learning.

After the first year teacher successfully completes at least one year of mentoring, he or she will then take the Praxis III assessment. The new teacher has up to three years to pass this assessment. The Praxis III is the summative evaluation that will determine if the teacher achieves full licensure.

Arkansas believes that not only will the Pathwise Mentoring Program increase the effectiveness of the new teachers, it will also be a key factor in helping to retain these quality teachers.

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PROJECT RENEW: RENEWING GENERAL EDUCATORS FOR INCLUSION

Introduction

School districts around the United States are faced with the challenge of preparing all students to be productive citizens. Therefore educators are rethinking how we educate our country's youth. One product of reform efforts is the emphasis on inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom. This means that general education and special education teachers must work together to provide students with an appropriate and quality education.

There is a national shortage of general and special education teachers, and high percentages of non-certified personnel are providing instruction to our country's youth. This problem is particularly prevalent in rural areas (Quality Counts, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Louisiana consistently reports critical shortages of certified personnel trained to meet the diverse needs of the school population (Louisiana Annual School Report, 1997-1998; 1998-1999; 1999-2000; 2000-2001). Most of these non-certified teachers have not had adequate training in best practices regarding inclusive education.

The 22nd Annual Report to Congress (2000) reported that fewer than half of students with disabilities nationally were served in general education classrooms, while only 24.7% of Louisiana students with disabilities were served in that setting (CSPD, 2000, p. 3). In comparison, placing students with disabilities in the general education is **increasing** nationally by 11%, they increased in Louisiana by 2%.

Training teachers to education students with disabilities in inclusive settings must be addressed with an effective support system that incorporates collaborative input and decision-making, and shared responsibility among general and special educators in higher education institutions and local education agencies. Such a support system is not in place in several parts of the state and is especially difficult to find in high poverty and rural areas where resources to support a systematic approach are minimal to non-existent. The special conditions of poverty, rural isolation, inner-city decay, increased incidences of violence, and other factors that are significant in Louisiana must be addressed.

To address the critical problems facing special education students and their instructional providers in Louisiana, Project ReNEW, a three-year federal grant, prepared sixty general educators to teach in inclusive settings. Participants were full-time employed teachers in regular education classrooms and earned certification for mild/moderate disabilities by completing 27 graduate credit hours in four semesters through successful collaboration between Southeastern Louisiana University (SLU), University of New Orleans (UNO), and two rural school districts. The purpose of this paper is to disseminate information about how project participants became certified in mild/moderate disabilities via a fast-track certification program in special education. Further, this paper will describe the instructional best practices for inclusion of students with disabilities. Details about how practica sites and supervising teachers were selected, will be given.

Innovative Course Delivery

Because half of the project participants live and work more than seventy miles from the university, it was necessary to utilize alternate course delivery in order to accommodate them. Some courses were delivered online with the use of blackboard technology. Courses not online or on campus were delivered in two rural school districts

using their buildings. This greatly reduced travel time for the participants. Adjunct professors were hired to teach the additional classes off campus.

Certification Timeline

Normally employed teachers who return to the university for add-on certification take 6 credit hours a year. At that rate, it takes them about four years to become certified. This program is a fast-track path to certification. The participants were required to take 6 or 9 hours per semester for four consecutive semesters for a total of 27 credit hours. The four cohorts entered the program at different times and were staggered by one or two semesters. Cohort one began in spring semester of 2000; cohort two began in summer semester of 2000; cohort three began in spring semester of 2001; and cohort four began in summer semester of 2001. Participants in cohorts one and three reside in rural areas and teach in their local school district. All cohorts will be certified by summer of 2002.

Course Sequence

The program consists of four consecutive semesters for each of four cohorts. The first semester course load consisted of an introduction to special education and a classroom organization and management course. The second semester courses were Behavioral Assessment and Intervention with Individuals with Exceptionalities and Approaches to Teaching Students with Learning and Behavior Problems. During the third semester, participants were required to enroll in 9 hours of coursework Methods of Teaching Basic Subjects Students with Mild/Moderate Impairments was taught on one night. The second night was a 6 credit hour class in assessment. The assessment course was a combination of Evaluation of Individuals with Exceptionalities and the Assessment Practicum. The final semester of training consisted of a course in Vocational Adjustments and a practicum in Mild/Moderate Disabilities. The practicum was another innovation in that the participants fulfilled the course requirements in their classrooms where they were employed.

Recruitment Procedures

Recruitment materials were sent to each school in the two school districts participating in the grant. Contacts were made with the principals and/or school building level committee chairperson. They in turn displayed notices and contacted teachers at their school who were working with students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Project personnel made follow-up phone calls to each school, attempting secure time to speak at their next faculty meeting to introduce the teachers to Project ReNew. Applications were accepted from interested applicants and reviewed for qualifications.

Retention Incentives

Participation in Project ReNew is very time intensive. All participants were employed teachers working full-time while they attended graduate level classes two nights per week. Incentives were used to help the project participants complete the intense program. All participants attended tuition free and were given a stipend of $125 if they completed each course with a "C" grade or better. This stipend could equal up to $1,125 for each participant. In addition, each participant had access to a lending library of books and videos which were specially selected by project personnel to enhance their knowledge and skills for teaching students with mild/moderate disabilities in inclusive settings. Laptop computers were also made available for participants to check out and use for their course work and to provide instruction in their classrooms.

Collaborative Training Efforts Between SLU and Two Rural School Districts

One of the components of Project ReNew is based on collaboration between Southeastern Louisiana University, the University of New Orleans, and two local educational agencies in rural areas that are experiencing high poverty. Individuals residing in the rural areas are very diverse and include individuals from Native American, African American, Cajun, Vietnamese and Creole descent. Project participants reside in their rural school districts and are highly invested in their respective communities.

Collaborative efforts between SLU and UNO consist of the following activities: (a) development of an Inclusive Practices Modules, (b) a comprehensive directory of services, (c) development of a local parent advisory

board for each rural school district, and (d) training project participants in providing instructional best practices for students with disabilities in their classroom. Project participants were videotaped demonstrating their newly acquired skills in their classrooms. These videotaped lessons will be used for training future special education teacher candidates in best instructional practices for inclusive classrooms.

Instructional Best Practices for Inclusion Via Video

A review of the literature for best practices for teaching students with disabilities in inclusive settings indicated that co-teaching, peer tutoring, high expectations, cooperative learning, and collaboration were the top five listed for instructional best practices (Duchardt et. al, 1999; Friend and Cook, 2000; Troen and Boles, 1994). These strategies were listed most by general education and special education teachers in rural areas. Project participants received training in how to use these instructional strategies in their classrooms. University and project personnel modeled and guided each participant as they practiced and honed their skills. Several visits were made to the schools. A video was created at the end of the school year by the project staff to demonstrate each participants newly developed skill. The video will be used to assist in preparing future teacher candidates.

Conclusion

Training special education teachers in a university-district partnership provides growth opportunities for university faculty, district special education administrators, local special education teachers, and community members who become students and then much needed teachers. Their professional growth impacts the quality of the teaching cadre, which positively impacts student learning in rural schools. Increased program completion rates support the fact that university faculty have become better educators, and rural districts have become stronger partners in recruiting, training and retaining quality special education teachers.

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THE ROLE OF THE RURAL SCHOOL PRINCIPAL ON THE IEP TEAM

Abstract

This article reviews issues involved in the administration of rural public school special education programs. Budget and personnel limitations that often occur in rural schools create challenges for rural school principals in directing the programs. The rural school principal is responsible for ensuring the involvement of all members of the IEP team in the planning process to avoid action that appears to be a predetermination of placement or action that may deny parental input in the decision-making. By organizing the special education program on models that involve all members in the planning and decision-making process the rural school principal the rural school principal can achieve greater success in distributing special education duties among school staff based on their abilities, certification, and authority.

The Role of the Rural School Principal on the IEP Team

The community, the board of education, the central administration, and the teachers regard the school principal as the person responsible for exercising leadership in his or her building. Often, however, special education programs receive less leadership from principals than do other school programs. The reason is two-fold: 1) in larger schools, special education programs are often administered by a director who is accountable to the administration board instead of the principal; 2) in smaller schools, where budgetary limitations may not allow for a full-time program director, the special education teacher, rather than the principal, is typically regarded as having the expertise to direct the program.

Rural school principals often deal with the second reason in which there is no designated program director or the title may be in name only and the special education teacher is the default director. However, the principal is the allocator or withholder of resources and information that can make a difference. The principal is the one who can encourage or discourage, free or inhibit, exercise positive leadership, or in the worst case, do nothing. Even if the principal attempts to avoid directly facing the issue of the disabled, the status quo that may create handicaps is reinforced. As Goor *et al.* state, "The principal establishes the overall climate and influences instructional practices; in fact the key predictor of a program is the principal's attitude toward it." (Goor, Schween, and Boyer, 1997).

Due to the limited funding and personnel resources typically found in rural schools, the rural school principal must rely on his or her organizational, leadership, and motivational skills to administer the special education program. By selecting appropriate organizational models on which to pattern the program, the rural school principal can involve all members of the individualized education program (IEP) team in the program management process.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) makes no distinction in school size or resources regarding the quality of public education students with disabilities are to receive. Specifically, the federal law ensures that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions and other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1412[a][5])

Similarly, the law does not specifically address the role of the school principal on the IEP team. Pursuant to the IDEA, the IEP team must include a representative of the local educational agency who – (I) is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities; (II) is knowledgeable about the general curriculum; and (III) is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the local educational agency (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1414[B][iv])

While the IDEA does not require the representative of the school district to be a principal, in practice, the principal normally fulfills that role.

The role of the rural school principal on the IEP team is determined primarily by the organizational structure of the school. Max Weber's (1947) classic analysis of bureaucracy fits almost all modern organizations, including school districts. The Weberian model of bureaucracy includes the following characteristics: a division of labor and specialization, an impersonal orientation, a hierarchy of authority, rules and regulations, and a career orientation.

Special education programs in urban school systems reflect Weber's model regarding division of labor and specialization more than do rural schools. For example, in urban schools, the most important administrator in providing special education is probably the local director of special education. That person has the responsibility for ensuring that local schools are adequately staffed with appropriately trained personnel and for overseeing the development and implementation of the IEPs for each child in the school district. The special education director must also develop the data necessary for obtaining funding from the state educational agency and ensure that appropriate policies are made and carried out. All of those responsibilities hinge on the person's ability to communicate with the school administration and board of education (Rothstein, 2000).

The role of the director of special education follows the expert model of information processing. That is, a person who has mastered the concepts and skills of a discipline or domain and can apply the knowledge in new settings (Glaser and Chi, 1989; Gardner, 1991). While experienced teachers and administrators also have expert model characteristics (intuitive processes to solve problems and make decisions), their training normally does not include the level of expertise in special education administration required to direct a special education program.

In urban schools, the director of special education leads the special education program. The power, influence, and control of the director come from the leadership situation. This situational control is referred to as position power. That is, the power the school district confers on the director of special education for the purpose of getting the job done (Fiedler and Garcia, 1987).

Rural school districts tend to be smaller than urban school districts, and as a result, less bureaucratic. For budgetary limitations, many rural schools cannot afford the administrative position of special education director; yet, the responsibilities of that position must be met. The responsibilities of a special education director can be met in either of two scenarios: 1) The duties may be assigned to personnel in addition to that person's other teaching and/or administrative duties; or, 2) the duties may be distributed among school staff based on their abilities, certification, and authority. Otherwise, the duties will go unmet and compliance with special education policies and procedures will be unreliable and unaccountable.

Scenario one is based on the rational organizational model where the person responsible for the special education director duties has sufficient control to ensure compliance with the program (Patterson, Purkey, & Parker, 1986). In a rural school, that person is most commonly the principal because the principal supervises the special and regular education teachers. Scenario two is based on the natural systems model where the authority to direct the special education program is distributed throughout the school, not at the upper levels of administration (Patterson, Purkey, & Parker, 1986).

One problem in distributing the responsibilities for various parts of the special education program throughout the school is that the conference of power for those duties may not be done, or clearly communicated to all involved (Seyfarth, 1996). An indispensable part of effective management for the rural school principal is to clearly establish lines of authority and to clarify responsibilities within the special education program. Unless that occurs, cooperation among special and regular education teachers, administrators, and others serving on the IEP team will be compromised.

The IEP team follows the natural systems model where having access to information, support, and resources is the basis for power to make things happen (Patterson, Purkey, & Parker, 1986). This power should be distributed throughout the team, not just at the special education director level. No one group or individual should have sufficient information or power to compel a high degree of coordination in the pursuit of the IEP goals; decisions should be based on consensus.

The advantage of using the rational systems model for the IEP team is that it can result in full use of human resources, higher-quality decisions, and clearer IEP goals. The IEP will also receive more commitment from the team members and achieve higher student achievement.

The team develops an IEP by using the strategic planning process. The team members work together to assess the internal and external educational environment, identify IEP goals, and develop strategies for achieving those goals (Sybouts, 1992). That planning can only be successful when all team members genuinely contribute to the planning process.

An urban school principal may only have to serve in the capacity of the representative of the school pursuant to the IDEA. While that responsibility is significant, it does not encompass directing the special education program. In contrast, the rural school principal serves in the capacity of school representative in addition to being responsible for staffing, training, and ultimate overseeing the development and implementation of the IEPs for each child in the district.

To place the responsibility of directing the program solely on the special education teacher exposes the school district to many potential problems. The rural school principal plays an important part in determining the level of position power each IEP team member has. To grant informal authority to the special education teacher to direct the special education program may greatly diminish the power of the other IEP team members to contribute to the process. Expert power is the special education teacher's ability to influence other team members' behavior based on specialized knowledge and skill in special education. As result, other team members are influenced because they believe the information and expertise held by the special education teacher are relevant and are things they do not have.

Expert power is a personal characteristic and does not depend on occupying a formal position of power (Hoy, Miskel, 1996). IDEA proscribes that the IEP be developed by consensus of the team. However, in reality, someone must lead the team in that process. Two factors are important with respect to IEP team leader-member relations: the quality of interpersonal relations between the leader and subordinates, and the level of informal authority granted to the leader. In the absence of the position of director of special education, it is more efficient and effective for the principal to hold the ultimate responsibility for leading the IEP team.

Leadership of the team is accomplished by ensuring each team member contributes to the planning process rather than by the principal directing how the IEP will be formed. Each team member's authority to contribute to the IEP is related to the skill and knowledge he or she holds regarding the process. Therefore, the principal can greatly enhance each member's authority within the team by providing training for all members in the IEP process.

An effective tool for training IEP team members not certified in special education is Appendix A to the 1999 IDEA regulations that implement the 1997 IDEA Amendments. When Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) in 1975, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) received many questions regarding the individualized education program (IEP). The USDOE consulted many persons experienced in IEP meetings and litigation concerning IEPs. As a result of those consultations, the USDOE added Appendix C to the regulations. Appendix C was 60 questions and answers concerning IEPs. Court case rulings were made based, in part, on quotes from Appendix C, therefore Appendix C became accepted as law.

The 1997 IDEA Amendments placed many of the statements from Appendix C in the statute itself. However, some additional issues had arisen from some of the many judicial interpretations of the IEP requirements. Therefore, Appendix C has been replaced by the new Appendix A which is forty questions and answers about the IEP process.

Appendix A is a valuable source of information about the IEP process. By providing effective in-service training on Appendix A to all regular and special education faculty, the rural school principal can assist all district educators to have expert power on the IEP team. The influence of regular and special education teachers on the team will be more balanced. This will not only improve harmony and communication among the team members, but also will convey professionalism and elicit confidence from students and parents in the team.

If all school personnel on the IEP team are knowledgeable about the process (i.e. whether or not IEP meetings can be tape recorded, whether or not attorneys may be present at IEP meetings, etc.), then all members can share responsibilities for conducting the meeting rather than relying solely on the special education teacher. The principal should call on all members of the team for information instead of gleaning information only from the special education teacher. Involving all members of the team creates ownership in the planning process and results in stronger commitment by all teachers involved in the student's IEP.

Involvement of all school members of the IEP in the planning process also helps to avoid action that appears to be a predetermination of placement or action that may deny parental input in the decision-making. Involvement of all members of the team ensures that relevant information about the child is shared with the parents in the meeting. Parents will feel part of the process more if all school members are also part of the process. Consensus is more likely to be reached and in a less adversarial manner.

The natural systems model, based on shared-decision making in the IEP process, is less efficient than the rational systems model whereby one person (normally the special education teacher) is primarily responsible for developing the student's IEP. However, by facilitating training for regular education teachers on the information from Appendix A as well as other sources, the rural school principal empowers those teachers with the expert model of information processing. The principal can then delegate special education director authority among the school personnel.

The natural systems organizational model allows another approach for applying knowledge to improve leadership in schools called situational engineering. Through situational engineering, the principal changes the responsibilities of the school's IEP team members to be more congruent with the traits of members. By enhancing the level of leadership of all team members in this way, the rural school principal can achieve greater success in distributing special education duties among school staff based on their abilities, certification, and authority. The result is a balanced program of special education that meets the requirements of the IDEA with the limited personnel resources commonly found in rural schools.

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THROUGH ALICE'S LOOKING GLASS: STUDYING OURSELVES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR STUDENTS

> "I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: Was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is, who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle!" (from Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll, 1988).

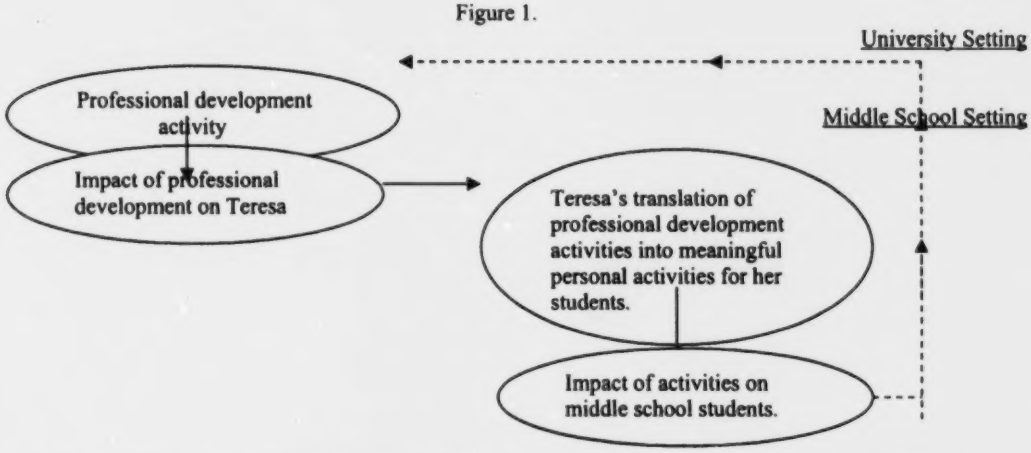
The stories of Alice in Wonderland and Alice through the Looking Glass remind us of the value of reflecting on our actions as means of better understanding ourselves. As general and special educators we struggle to improve educational outcomes for all students and may feel as though we are participating in the Queen of Hearts croquet game, where the rules are ambiguous and the players are rapidly changing. Instructional strategies that are designed to give both educators and students an opportunity to reflect on their own learning actions, dispositions and challenges may provide teachers and students with the kind of essential knowledge needed to encourage the development of recently mandated self-advocacy behaviors (Van Reusen, 1998). Specifically, the more our students know and discover about themselves as learners, the less ambiguity and confusion there will be in instructional programming and IEP/ITP development.

This paper describes a collaborative project between Tammy (a teacher educator) and Teresa (a middle school special education teacher) where a professional development experience used at the university level was translated into a meaningful personal experience for the students in Teresa's middle school program. Teresa was a graduate student in Tammy's learning disabilities course. Her self-study experience in the course led her create similar experiences for her middle school students. This paper describes the learning experiences from both Tammy's (teacher educator) and Teresa's (middle school teacher) point of view and is written in chronological order. Tammy's thoughts and reflections are written in italics.

Tammy's Vision – Meaningful Professional Development for Teachers

Recent changes in accreditation standards call for teacher education programs to show evidence of K-12 student learning (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), 2000). It is this mandate that inspired this project. As a teacher educator I am often left to guess about the impact my teaching has on my student's students. Not unlike Alice struggling to get into the beautiful garden, I reflect on my choices and continue to search for learning experiences that will shape my teacher education courses, evolve into meaningful K-12 classroom practices and improve outcomes for K-12 students. Figure 1 reflects my vision for connecting graduate studies for practicing teachers and outcomes for school age students. The dotted line represents the connection I find so elusive, but worth pursuing.

Figure 1.


University Setting
Professional development activity
Middle School Setting
Impact of professional development on Teresa
Teresa's translation of professional development activities into meaningful personal activities for her students.
Impact of activities on middle school students.

While preparing for my graduate course in severe learning disabilities I struggled to write the course description. All of my attempts were descriptions filled with jargon and vocabulary. The words sounded elegant and important, but as I reread the words it occurred to me that a class of this nature (e.g. one filled with vocabulary and definitions) would not result in a meaningful understanding of the disability. After a week of struggle and reading exams I realized that many students could accurately define terms and interpret test data, but they failed to personalize the learners they were describing. My students understood little about how they learn nor were they given opportunities to examine themselves as learners. My second realization was that my students knew even less about how their own students learned. I asked myself, "How could teachers who did not understand their own ways of learning, teach students whose ways of learning are unique and complex?" The current emphasis in special education on self-advocacy and self-determination and the legal expectations that students will, at age 14, begin to advocate for their own instructional needs concerned me. My students, who were practicing teachers, were unsure how to help their students understand their disabilities and their unique learning needs. Drawing on Schon's (1983; 1987) ideas about reflection on practice, and Munby and Russell (1993) giving "authority to experience", I decided to create a guided self-study project designed to move my students from a vocabulary-laden understanding of disability to an understanding of themselves as learners. Metaphorically, I gave my students a "looking glass" and ten adventures and waited to see what they learned. Again, wanting to impact students in schools, the ultimate goal of the self-study project was to help my students use this experience to create a "looking glass" that would result in meaningful self-study activities for their students.

Teresa's Expectations

After six years of teaching special education in a rural middle school, I decided it was time for me to further my education. I enrolled in graduate school with the goal of earning my masters degree in special education with an emphasis on learning disabilities. My goals were simple. I wanted to learn techniques for teaching students with learning disabilities, and to earn credits for re-certification. I expected to become a better teacher, but I never expected to understand my students' challenges or learn to how to help them understand their individual learning differences.

Description of a Sample of the 10 Self-study Activities for Teachers and Teresa's Impressions.

The self-study activities were designed to give my graduate students concrete experiences that targeted specific traits, characteristics and experiences of students with learning disabilities in and out of school settings. Initially, the self-studies were designed only as a complement to the course. Overtime, the self-studies became the focus of class discussions. The activities spanned the length of the semester and each varied in the length of time necessary to complete. Activities were due on a specific date so that class discussion and reflection could occur. Only a brief description of a sample (five of ten) of the activities is included in this article.*

In self-study 1 (SS-1) students engaged in learning about themselves as learners. Students completed the Learning Styles Indicator by Bernice McCarthy (1994). I selected McCarthy's work because it challenges learners to distinguish between perceiving concretely vs abstractly, and active vs reflective processing. Self-study 2

elaborated on SS-1 and encouraged teachers to examine the relationship between their learning style and teaching style. McCarthy's work aligns learning styles with teaching styles; therefore, my students could see how their learning style translates into their classroom teaching. Using the results of SS-1, my graduate students were asked to redesign the course assignments, to better suit their own learning style. The goal of SS-2 was to move students beyond relying on educational jargon and vocabulary to describe how they learn. I wanted my students to generalize their understanding of how they learn by giving them an opportunity to create concrete instructional activities specific to their unique ways of learning.

A survey was constructed for SS-3, which required students to reflect on their own early learning experiences. I probed students for details about learning to read and write, ride a bike, please an adult, keep track of their belongings, and areas where they struggled. Students were encouraged to talk to siblings and parents in instances when they had no recollections.

Teresa's Reflections. The first three self-studies helped me to reflect on myself as a learner. The activities seemed simple since I only had to think of myself. When I took the learning styles inventory, the results were not surprising. I knew that I learned best in a traditional classroom with clear expectations. I was surprised to find that my learning style reflects my teaching style, and I may be teaching in a way that makes it more difficult for my students to learn. Remembering my school days in SS-3 helped me realize that most of my positive memories of school were about the relationships that I had with my teachers and coaches. Those experiences definitely influence my teaching.

The remaining self-studies gave my graduate students the opportunity to experience many of the characteristics of students with learning disabilities: specifically, poor motivation, learned helplessness, auditory perception difficulties and resiliency. SS-5 addressed motivation by asking students to view two videos, one, a favorite movie, and a second movie in a genre they find distasteful. Students were asked to document their behaviors during the self-study.

The next three self-studies helped me to better understand some of the characteristics of my students. In my undergraduate course work I learned about the characteristics of students with learning disabilities. I could recite textbook definitions of "lack of motivation", " learned helplessness", "discrepancies in auditory perception", and "resiliency" but I had never consciously experienced these challenges. In SS- 5, I rented two videos, one movie that I wanted to watch (Pretty Woman) and another that I didn't (Sphere). I watched the first movie immediately. I was not conscientious about the second movie and therefore was charged a costly late fee. Asking me to watch the second movie was like me asking my students to write a three- page paper. There was no motivation to complete the assignment. I have renewed sensitivity to motivation problems in my classroom. Motivation is more complex than I thought.

SS-6 targeted learned helplessness by having students revisit an activity that they failed at earlier in their lives. After a lengthy brainstorming session, students compiled lists of activities they no longer participate in because of consistent failure. In SS-6 students were required to attempt one of these failed activities again. They were asked to attempt the study at least five times over a two-week period and to give the study their "best effort."

While trying to convince other teachers that my students were not lazy, I often introduced teachers to the term "learned helplessness." In SS-6 I was able to experience learned helplessness first hand. I had to revisit a task that I had previously failed. If it had not been for this class, I would have never attempted to do this task again, why do something that I knew I could not do? I tried once again to make greeting cards using an embossing technique. I was actually embarrassed to bring my cards to class because they were so ugly. I think my students feel the same way when they are asked to read or write. I can now understand the resistance they put up everyday when I am asking them to do something they think they cannot do.

An article by Smith (1989) used the metaphor of wearing a "mask" to describe problem behaviors of students with learning disabilities. I used this article to introduce resiliency in SS-8 and focused on the "masks" we wear to hide our lack of ability and insecurities. The article describes eighteen different masks, including, the mask of invisibility, the mask of the victim and the mask of outrageousness. My graduate students identified "masks" they wear to hide their less appealing behaviors and their motivation for wearing masks.

SS-8 helped me to understand the meaning behind my students' behavior. While I read the article about the masks that students wear in different situations, I recognized each of my students in their different masks. Some of them wear the class clown mask, others wear the invisibility mask, but the majority of my students wear the mask of not caring. Students wear these masks to deal with difficult situations as a way to cope. Although masks are a good coping mechanism, I realized that in order for my students to learn, the masks must come off. If they keep the masks on, they tend to focus too much on how other people see them rather than learning.

SS- 9 continued the theme of resiliency by uncovering personal situations where others expected us to fail. In SS-9 these expectations of failure were referred to as "pongs". I told my students to imagine they were playing a ping-pong game where two players are evenly matched and their rallies "ping" out a soft beat. I told them a "pong" is when one of the players gets very aggressive and slams the ball over the net into the opponent and she is defenseless to the aggressive play. A "pong" is a harmful, mean-spirited comment that hits you so hard that you are defenseless to respond. Pongs undermine our self-confidence.

In SS-9, I was asked to remember the "pongs" (e.g. mean statements or expectations of failure) that have been said to me as a child and as an adult. I can still remember the "pongs" that were used against me in junior high. I felt that as a teacher, I had some control over the "pongs" that were said in my classroom. After this self-study, I listened to how my students spoke to each other in my room. I was amazed at the number of "pongs" I heard. My students use "pongs" directed toward themselves and others as a way to cope when other students make fun of their disability. My hope is that the more my students learn about their disability the less they will use "pongs" against themselves and each other.

Finally, SS-10 emphasized the necessity of quality teaching for students with learning disabilities. This activity was designed to remind my students of the challenge of learning something new. Students were required to choose a new skill or activity they would like to learn. This study required students to teach themselves, without any direct instruction from a person. They were allowed to use books, or pictures, but the use of audio or videotape was forbidden. Students were required to demonstrate their new achievement and share their learning log during our last class.

SS-10 was a great activity for teachers. In this activity I tried to teach myself wreath-making. I bought a book that gave explicit directions, but it was written for someone who had previous experience. I needed instructions for beginners. It was difficult to teach myself a new skill. You never know if you are doing the skill correctly. No one is there to help or give feedback. It would have been easier if someone showed me how to make a wreath. Through my frustrations of having to teach myself, I was reminded that some of my students might need to be shown what to do rather than being left to read and interpret the directions on their own.

<u>Tammy's Reflections of the Self-study as Professional Development</u>

When the caterpillar asked Alice, "Who are you?" she remarked that she hardly knows who she is now, but she knew who she was that morning. At the conclusion of my graduate course I was certain that the self-study project had impacted my students. What was unclear was how they were impacted and whether my graduate students would use the experience to enhance their teaching, or whether they would go back to their classrooms and conduct business as usual. After reading the students' work I realized that while my students could not know what it was like to be a student with a learning disability, they had reflected on the characteristics of their students through a new lens and old perceptions began to dissipate. Knowing my students could never be insiders into the world of disabilities, their writings on each self-study indicated that they were breaking down some of the barriers between themselves and their students. In a summary of the self-study experience a graduate student wrote:

> "We are all so busy rushing to get things done and cramming information down our students throats that we forget what it is like to be that age again. This class made me take a step back and slow down. It truly made me stop and think how my students must feel in my class sometimes. Now I am wondering if I am hindering them or helping them and what I can do now to better serve them. I also learned about myself (this was scary, but important)".

<u>Teresa's Reflections of the Self-study as Professional Development</u>

Even though I have been a student all of my life, I have never fully understood myself as a learner. By completing Tammy's ten self-studies, I have grown to understand the importance of knowing what kind of learner I am. I also realize how important it is for my students with learning disabilities to see themselves as learners, to

understand the difficulties they face, and to advocate for themselves. My students typically say they are "stupid, and can't learn". I tell them that it is not true, **but I have never helped them to understand why**. Completing the self-studies made me realize that I am in a position to help them understand how they learn, and perhaps why they learn the way they do.

Teresa's Translation of the Self-study Experience into her Practice

I decided to use a self-study experience with eight students assigned to my afternoon resource program to help them think of themselves as learners with the hope that they could begin to communicate with others about their disability. Realizing the self-study activities in Tammy's class were not developed for eighth graders, I created six self-study activities that were developmentally appropriate for eight of my students with learning disabilities. I believed some students were more ready to learn about themselves than others were but I thought they would all benefit from the experience. Below is a brief description of a sample* (four of the six) self-study activities I created for middle school students with learning disabilities.

SS-1 Learning Styles Inventory Revised. Similar to Tammy's SS-1, eight students completed the Learning Styles Indicator by McCarthy (1994). During the activity, I defined the vocabulary, read the inventory orally, and responded to individual questions. After the students compiled their individual results, we discussed the meaning of the results and the implications. We discussed how they could use the information in their general education classes. Students had typical middle school responses such as using their learning style to avoid homework, and as an opportunity to tell their teachers they talk too much. Understanding the implications of this inventory took a great deal of discussion, but was critical to the success of SS-2.

SS-2 Letters to My Teachers. SS-2 was designed to give my students an opportunity to share with their general education teachers what they had learned in SS-1. My students wrote letters to their teachers explaining their learning style and offering accommodation suggestions that could be used to help them be more successful. Many of their letters were similar. They all mentioned that more time and advance organizers for notes would help them. Most students wanted more time to think about the information given in class. They wrote about how it was difficult for them to understand something immediately, but if it was reviewed several times in class, they could eventually understand it. Interestingly all of my students asked their teachers not to write on the board or overhead in red because it was more difficult to read. They also asked their teachers to talk slower, to use more hands-on activities in class, and to give directions in smaller steps. It was exciting to see my students articulate their needs. I believe this is an important first step in developing self-advocacy skills.

SS-3 Teaching Yourself a New Skill. SS-3 was a modification of Tammy's SS-10. In this activity, I gave each student written directions on how to fold a paper bird. Students were given one sheet of paper and told to sit somewhere in the room where they could not see anyone else. Further, they could not ask anyone for help. I observed as my students attempted this project. After five minutes, the activity was no longer fun for them. I heard them say, " This is stupid," "I can't do this", and "Do we have to do this?" After 15 minutes, we discussed why it was difficult to learn something without a teacher. They mentioned that it would have been helpful if I had demonstrated how to fold a paper bird or if I allowed them to work with a partner. We discussed how this experience could help them to be more successful in general education classes. They talked about how not listening in class, not paying attention and not asking questions would cause them to teach themselves the material on their own time. They also mentioned that directions can be confusing, and if they do not ask for help, they are just guessing and might not be doing an assignment correctly. I found these comments promising. If my students could articulate how they could make learning easier in this simulated activity, then perhaps they could recognize the value of behaviors such as asking for help in their general education classes.

SS-6 How I think. For this activity, students drew a picture of what they visualize happens to information in their brain when they are trying to remember or learn something new. The pictures ranged from a circle with a light bulb in the center to a head with arrows about where thoughts go and how to get them out. In another interesting picture, a student drew boxes for storing information on different subjects such as math and English. He recognized that it was easier to remember things when his thinking was organized. He already understood the concept of organizing a retrieval system. After the drawings were complete, we discussed their pictures. One student's picture revealed that he did not process what his teachers were saying. In most classes he only heard "Can I help you?" and "Let's go home". He identified all other sounds as "blah, blah, blah". Based on what I learned in SS-6 I focused my teaching on helping my students to develop their own strategies to store and retrieve information.

Teresa's Reflections

By creating my own self-study project I was able to help my students to see themselves as learners. It helped my students begin to understand behaviors associated with their disability. I anticipated that this experience would help them to begin to self-advocate. I was impressed that some of the students were able to study themselves. The major benefit of this project was that all of my students learned that it was their right and responsibility to let teachers know what accommodations they need to be successful. Some students also realized they have a responsibility in the learning process. Specifically, they can choose to listen intently, ask for clarification, and develop strategies for storing and retrieving information.

Our Final Thoughts

While our independent experiences with this project impacted each of us differently, we believe there are three common perceptions of the project worth noting. First, it was important to validate Tammy's vision and reassure ourselves that what happens at the university level can impact instruction in K-12 settings. Second, we agreed that the self-study experience was valuable for teachers and provided greater insight into the challenges of teaching students with learning disabilities. Finally, self-study experiences for students with learning disabilities that are facilitated by special educators may be an important tool in initiating students into their self-advocacy responsibilities.

Individuals determine the value of the self-study experience for themselves. The graduate students (all of whom were teachers) who participated in the project each favored different activities and through their own "looking glass" found different activities rewarding. However, there was consensus among the participants on three issues. First, the self-study experience helped the graduate students understand the vocabulary they used to describe students with learning disabilities. They were able to enhance their language of learning disabilities by including concrete examples that the listener, perhaps a parent or student could relate to. Second, the self-study re-sensitized a group of sophisticated learners (graduate students) who had a shared compassion for their students with learning disabilities, but who had, over time, lost their sensitivity to what it feels like to struggle to learn and achieve. Finally, the self-study experience, and SS-10 in particular, reminded the participants that, just as Alice complained about her lessons, learning can be difficult. There is no substitute for good teaching.

As was the case at the university level, the middle school students valued different experiences in the self-study activity. Teresa found two themes that permeated the students reflections on their experiences. Students believed that by knowing themselves as a learner they would have more control over their learning environments and their own behavior. They also believed that if they knew more about themselves they could tell their teachers "who they are." Knowing more about themselves as learners would help their teachers see them as a learner and not just a "problem kid."

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* Contact the first author for complete descriptions of SS activities for teachers and students.

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WISDOM FROM THOSE WHO DO IT WELL: SPECIAL EDUCATION MASTER TEACHERS

Introduction

Urban and rural districts alike often find themselves facing a real and recalcitrant shortage of special education teachers. In a nutshell, too few train, too few seek positions, and too few stay. Those who enter the profession leave for numerous reasons, often believing they were ill prepared to handle job responsibilities. How might teacher preparation change to encourage more to train, seek positions and stay? What might teacher education start doing or stop doing so the profession does not keep getting what it has gotten, namely a personnel shortage?

This paper explains the capturing of master special educators' ideas for improving teacher preparation. Of particular importance were suggestions with regard to changes in field supervision. The wisdom, as well as the process of electronically collecting it, benefited the university faculty as well as the exemplary special educators themselves.

Asking Questions

Field experiences are pivotal teacher preparation components. The transformation of a college student to a fledgling teacher "does not occur on the college campus under the watchful eye of a professor but in an elementary or secondary school under the direction of a classroom teacher" (Henry and Beasley, 1996, p. 2). Therefore, they are common sense targets for addressing teacher preparation factors that could fuel the personnel shortage in special education. Improving field experiences is likely to ensure that candidates exit teacher education programs with the skills and confidence to seek and remain in special education positions.

An important question flows from targeting field experiences: Do long-standing supervision procedures based on general education classroom situations fit today's special education student teaching experience? Preliminary answers to this question were sought through the Electronic Enhance of Supervision Project (EESP), a four phase project underwritten by Ameritech.

Seeking Answers

Teacher educators have much to learn from practitioners who "do it well," as they are uniquely qualified to express how changes in special education services have affected what new teachers need to know and be able to do. Many of the recent reform movements to improve the status of teaching call for professional practice shaped by practitioners in the field (Darling-Hammond, 1987). Asking teachers to utilize their expertise as special education teachers to analyze, critique and adapt traditional supervision models affirms practitioners' shared responsibility for teacher preparation and provides a "reality check" for university faculty. To answer these questions, two university faculty members collaborated with experienced special educators.

Through EESP, faculty from Indiana University Southeast explored the use of technology to enhance its field experiences, especially the supervision skills of classroom teachers with whom teacher candidates are placed. Over a two year period, special education teachers dialogued via webcam, electronic mailing list, and e-mail about

various challenges facing today's special needs teacher and how recent changes in the delivery model impact the supervision of field experiences.

Beyond the valuable insights into supervision, EESP also documented the feasibility of using technology for training and coaching special needs teachers, especially applicable to those in remote rural settings. The project explored differences between higher education and public schools with regard to: 1) bureaucracies involved, 2) job responsibilities and asynchronous communication, and 3) the applicability of emerging technologies for use with these partnerships (see Appendix A and B for comparison points and technical issues encountered).

21st Century Service Delivery—20th Century Supervision

Much has changed in special education since the mid 1980s. The complexion and complexity of special educators' work have been transformed and described as "the most significant movement in special education in the past two decades" (Kirk, Gallagher, and Anastasiow, 2000, p. 58). According to the EESP teachers, these changes have resulted in some mismatches between the ways special educators actually operate in the schools and some of the expectations and procedures used in supervision models based on the archetypal general education classroom.

Since the early twentieth century, various stage development theories have been used to describe the progression of teacher candidates through field experience (Piland and Anglin, 1993; Slick, 1995). Field experiences often begin with the student teacher observing students to a later stage when the student teacher assumes complete responsibility for classroom management and planning. Additional theories describe areas such as communication strategies (Shaw-Baker, 1995), characteristics of effective mentoring (Kay, 1990; Portner, 1998; Rowley, 1999) and conferencing guidelines (Henry and Beasley, 1996). Supervision continues to focus on the archetypal 20th century general education classroom:

- One teacher makes the critical instructional decisions for one classroom of students,
- One student teacher works toward supplanting that teacher for a few weeks, and
- One university supervisor provides support to the teacher and university student.

The 20th century supervision models were basically compatible with how special education services were delivered until the last two decades. Prior to the 1990s, the special education classroom situation might have differed from general education in that one or two instructional assistants were in the same room with the teacher. Even so, it was a special educator or the assistant under his or her direct site supervision who provided the instruction. Too, though possibly more so on paper than in reality, shared decision-making between the general and special educator was done when resource pull-out was used. Even with those two differences between general and special education, the primary decision-making for instruction or service rested almost exclusively with the special education teacher.

The 21st century special education classroom is often not a classroom at all but rather the point of deployment of services that follow students with special needs into their general education classrooms. This "classroom" differs dramatically from the archetypal general education classroom in the following major ways:

- More classroom teachers as decisions makers are on the instructional team for any one student with special needs. Thus the complexity of the interactions and sources of opinions for the student teacher to attend to are dramatically magnified.
- Service is increasingly being delivered simultaneously in multiple classrooms and by several staff members rather than by one or two staff members in the supervising teacher's classroom. Therefore, unless the supervisor shadows the student teacher, much of what a teacher candidate practices will go unobserved by the supervising teacher but witnessed, at least tangentially so, by a general education teacher and/or an instructional assistant.
- The special educator is involved less and less in creating core lesson plans and instead adapts them either in advance or on-demand. In some situations, it is the responsibility of the instructional assistant to modify the plans. Hence, the notion of planning by the student teacher is quite dissimilar to the planning done by general education student teachers, according the EESP teachers.
- In co-teaching situations at the secondary level, the student teacher is paired with a general education classroom teacher whose content knowledge is generally greatly superior to that of the student teacher. These situations may be interpersonally fragile and the learning curve quite steep for a novice teacher.

EESP teachers report that stakes are so high in a few of these situations that they find alternative experiences for the student teacher during that class period.

- In situations where the supervising teacher's time is dominated by crisis intervention, organizing and checking documentation and managing two to seven instructional assistants or more, the student teacher witnesses the mentor teacher performing a more-or-less mid-management position rather than primarily planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction. Exemplary classroom supervisors told university faculty that their adult-to-adult relationships were the most difficult part of their jobs. Long-standing supervision models do not adequately address this aspect of special education student teaching.
- Rural schools of the 20th century were hard pressed to find ways to access to resources found in urban areas and universities were less likely to be aware of and capitalize upon the wisdom of outstanding special educators tucked away in remote areas. Today, the Internet minimizes access issues among and between universities and P-12 schools.

These classroom changes are consequential, affecting a number of aspects of the special education student teaching. Three aspects are highlighted in the remainder of this article.

Assuming Teaching Responsibilities

Unlike the self-contained special needs classroom, the inclusion classroom offers new challenges to the cycle of supervision, particularly how the student teacher assumes increasingly more responsibilities belonging to the classroom supervisor. The common supervision model is based on the typical general education classroom situation and resembles a bell-curve. The field experience begins with a period of observation, gradually incorporates increased teaching responsibilities, and then returns duties to the classroom teacher. The gradual curve is possible because there is one teacher in charge and the instruction is delivered to the entire group or sequentially to small groups in the same classroom. The assumption of duties in self-contained and pull-out resource situations could basically follow the same curve, with some modifications made for one or two instructional assistant(s) working in the same classroom. In all these cases, it is clear that it is the classroom teachers' responsibilities and not the instructional assistants' duties that the student teacher will perform.

However, when services follow children into general education, a question arises: whose duties should student teachers assume? Should they take over what the supervising teacher is doing (i.e., primarily crisis intervention, monitoring, and coordinating assistants) or what the assistants are doing (i.e., providing direct services)?

To have direct experiences with a variety of students, student teachers need to go from classroom to classroom, quickly acclimating themselves to different teachers, classroom environments and subject matter. They are often immediately immersed in delivering instruction with no time to plan. They can be unclear of what their relationship is to general education teachers and other instructional staff in the same room. Therefore role clarification must explicitly communicated to all stakeholders.

The 21st century student teacher must have thorough knowledge of policies and procedures from the first day of the placement. The more instructional assistants a cooperating teacher is managing, the greater the number of procedural details that must be "handed over" to the student teacher. Therefore, conferencing between the supervising teacher and the student teacher should be more frequent and focused and the topics regularly reviewed. Within the first few days of the experience these topics are crucial: behavior intervention plans, crisis and safety intervention procedures, and relationships with other teachers and instructional assistants.

Learning from Models

Field directors seek out exemplary special educators recognized for their high commitment to the teaching task, a pattern of helping others find success, empathy, and positive communication styles. Carefully selecting an exemplary teacher is expected to yield strong mentoring, modeling, and supervising. For the 21st century special education student teacher, the long-standing strategy of "watch what your teacher does" may need to be rethought. Rethinking is warranted because when there is decentralized service delivery, the student teaching classroom becomes many classrooms and with a great number of instructional faculty and staff.

When services are delivered in general education classrooms, student teachers are exposed to multiple teaching models within and across classrooms. Teaching assistants and general education teachers are likely to become models for field experience students, whether intended or not. Multiple models mean more complex dynamics. The variety of modeling, often over a short period of 5-8 weeks, may leave the student teacher lacking a solid philosophical perspective on teaching and learning.

The well-trained master teacher who was selected to provide modeling may feel frustrated by the lack of opportunities to demonstrate quality teaching strategies because her/his job is to coordinate the adults rather than deliver direct services. Therefore the master teacher and student teacher should routinely discuss instructional strategies that the student teacher has observed. These discussions should clarify what is and is not best practices.

Being Evaluated

The 21st century special education supervisor also experiences issues surrounding the supervision and evaluation of the student teacher. When services are centralized in a special education classroom, direct "line of sight" supervision occurs. However, decentralized service delivery makes it more likely that other teachers or instructional assistants have considerable direct observation of the student teacher. Student teachers need to be apprised of what role, if any, other staff members will have in the evaluation process. Those expected to contribute their views of the student teachers' progress should be clear about performance expectations. Additionally, supervising teachers should be deliberate about observing and directly evaluating their student teachers, lest they become but "ships passing in the night."

Conclusion

According to practitioners collaborating with university faculty, professional education for 21st century special education supervising teachers needs to take into account service delivery changes that affect three key aspects of student teaching: assuming responsibilities, modeling, and evaluating. There same practitioners believe that emerging technologies could make it possible for universities to capture the voices, wisdom and skills of a greater variety of exemplary special educators. Webcams and email could make it feasible to have more field placements in rural areas and for exemplary teachers at distant sites to contribute meaningfully to shaping teacher education.

For further information about the website visit: (http://homepages.ius.edu/LZ/webeesp/web_docs/).

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Appendix A

SELECTED COMPARISON POINTS BETWEEN PUBLIC SCHOOL PARTNERS & IUS FACULTY

Points of Comparison	Participants	
	Public School Teachers	University Faculty
Time to Participate	Outside Workday	Inside Workday
Priority	Low	Medium
Need for Technical Assistance	High	High
Availability of needed hardware and software	Variable	Consistent
Bandwidth Availability	Variable	Consistent
Workday use of electronic communication	Low	Medium
Complexity of bureaucracy	Greatest at entré level (permission to install)	Greatest at preparation of grant proposal

Appendix B
EESP Technical Issues
Desktop Conferencing Using CU-See-Me

Band Width

The bandwidth may not be the same for all school sites. Some buildings may not have T1 connections. Building use is likely to be high during school hours. Scheduling videoconferences for after school hours is advisable.

Computer Hardware

Some buildings have old computers that make it difficult to run web cams. Old computers may need additional RAM to make the program run smoothly. Computers with Win95 operating systems have difficulty supporting USB, a parallel port camera may be needed but not easy to locate. (Parallel ports are easily identified because this connection is about an inch in width and has clips on the sides.)

Internet access might only be in the library or computer lab.

Generally, it is better to set up a static IP number at the university and have the remote sites call into that IP rather than expect each remote site to have a static IP.

Connecting Everyone Together

CU-SeeMe can accommodate several simultaneous users through the use of reflectors. However, a school's firewalls might not permit this option.

Printer

In one case the printer needed to be disconnected in order for the software to run effectively.

Security of Equipment

It is advisable to lock down cameras, and mark equipment that goes out into the school so that it does not become mixed in with their equipment.

Software Issues

It is important to use the matching serial number for CU SeeMe to run software.

Quickcam software doesn't work well with Windows 2000 and therefore some of the system 2000 files may need to be manually removed. Codec and select video features may need to be disabled.

Sound quality

Experiment turning the actual microphone piece in different directions, closer to the face or further away before concluding that the microphone itself is faulty. Make sure the microphone is plugged into the microphone jack rather than the "line in" jack. #323 will let you connect with other things....

Tutorials

To assist the school setting, prepare tutorials that include a printout of the actual screen for the steps to be taken.

Trial Runs

There are several suggestions to make the trial runs more effective. If possible, have a technical person present at each end. Having a phone nearby allows for calls from one site to another.

Multicultural

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RURAL MULTICULTURAL FIELD-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION: PROGRAM DESIGNS, CURRICULUM MATERIALS, AND DISTANCE EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY

Rural Personnel Shortages

Significant personnel shortages in special education have been noted in the 22nd Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of IDEA Act (USDE, 2000a). With predictions of even more serious teacher shortages in the next several years, there is an especially critical need for additional special education teachers for students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in rural areas (USDE, 2000b). In addition, the current emphasis on providing nondiscriminatory assessment procedures and assessing the effectiveness of multicultural instructional programs is drawing attention to the efficacy of traditional special education and general education teacher training programs which typically do not offer systematically integrated coursework and practicum experiences specific to the multicultural characteristics of students with disabilities (Baca & Cervantes, 1998; Gallegos & McCarty, 2000; Gollnick & Chinn, 2001; Salend, 2001). It is challenging for districts to recruit and retain special education teachers, especially those from culturally diverse backgrounds, but it is critical for universities and school districts to develop creative solutions for special education teacher recruitment and retention.

Program Models

In response to the need for special education teachers in rural areas with high numbers of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional)CLDE students, four innovative programs (BEST, LEAP, DREAMS, and BRIDGE) have been developed in rural areas of Arizona. These four programs have been successful in preparing Mexican-American and Native American local paraprofessionals and teachers to become special education teachers or general educators trained in best practices to teach English Language Learners (ELLs) with disabilities in their own rural communities. All of these programs are based in rural and remote communities in Arizona, either on the border of Mexico or on the Navajo Reservation. The design of each program relates directly to the needs of these rural communities where the participants are best served by bringing the university programs directly into the local schools.

Developing Rural Exceptional-educators to Address Multicultural Students (DREAMS) is designed to prepare special education teachers to meet the culturally and linguistically diverse needs of Native American and Mexican-American students with disabilities and their families especially those living in rural and remote areas (Peterson & Showalter, 1999). DREAMS is a collaborative program among NAU-CEE, NAU-Yuma,Tuba City Unified School District in Tuba City, Arizona, and several rural school districts in the Yuma, Arizona area. Program participants include field-based students who were originally from NAU's main campus in Flagstaff and paraprofessionals living and working in the Tuba City and Yuma areas. The paraprofessionals are typically Native American (Navajo, Hopi, and a few Apache) and Mexican-American students who have always wanted to become special education teachers but have had home, family, and cultural responsibilities which prevented them from moving to the main campus of a university to embark on full-time study. DREAMS is a "self-contained" program in which the on-site NAU faculty member teaches most of the courses supplemented by other NAU faculty involvement and local guest speakers. From this a "seamless" curriculum is developed where the key elements of the content of the first course are woven into the content of the second course and so on to provide an overall integration of the knowledge and skills necessary to teach students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Bilingual Rural Inclusive Development for General and Exceptional-educators (BRIDGE) prepares Masters Degree special educators to work in rural areas of Arizona with a high percentage of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. These areas also have a high degree of personnel shortage for individuals to work with children with disabilities. Coursework for the entire Masters Degree in Special Education with an emphasis in Bilingual Special Education is delivered through a distance technology approach combined with on-site face-to-face courses. Major goals of the project are to train potential leaders in the field of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners (CLDE), utilize a Trainer of Trainers (TOT) model to deliver additional inservice training in CLDE inclusive strategies, and to develop and disseminate culturally and linguistically appropriate curriculum materials. Recruitment and enrollment efforts for the first cohort have been conducted successfully, as judged by the high retention rate (90%) of the original students enrolled. There are currently 21 students completing their second year of coursework in Yuma and Tuba City. The makeup of this cohort is quite diverse, with four students of Hopi descent, five of Navajo descent, eight of Hispanic background, and four of Anglo background. All students have some degree of proficiency in either the Hopi, Navajo, or Spanish languages.

Bilingual/ESL Special-education Training (BEST) is the reverse degree program of BRIDGE in that BEST is a Masters Degree program in Bilingual Multicultural Education and then similarly includes a focus on CLDE student identification, assessment, methods, and materials. This program model illustrates how a graduate program in general education (Bilingual Multicultural Education) can creatively incorporate coursework in best practices for assessing and teaching rural CLDE students. As a result, general educators become knowledgeable in teaching culturally diverse students with disabilities in the general education classroom. BEST works with a consortium of rural school districts in the Yuma area on the border of Mexico. In addition to the Masters Degree, the project provides coursework leading to an endorsement in bilingual education and/or English as a Second Language, assists teachers in developing Spanish language curriculum for students with disabilities, and builds in a Trainer of Trainers model Professional Development program. BEST capitalizes on use of a Distance Education Program with service delivery via the WEB and Interactive Instructional Television (IITV) so that rural teachers can remain in their local communities while participating fully in a Master's Degree/Endorsement Program in Bilingual Education.

Limited-English-proficient-students Education for All Professionals (LEAP) works with rural school districts serving 75% Mexican-American students in the Yuma area on the border of Mexico. LEAP assists general education teachers in obtaining a Bilingual Multicultural Education/English as a Second Language Endorsement. The project provides special education and technology modules integrated into all courses. Participating teachers are presented with training in best practice strategies for working with limited English proficient (LEP) or English Language Learner (ELL) students and LEP (or ELL) students with disabilities. Recognizing the importance of the role that administrators and counselors play in the students' education, counselors and administrators are included in the four Cohort Groups receiving training in the LEAP project. LEAP Fellows actively participate in development of English as a Second Language (ESL) inclusion/technology rich curriculum materials and in a yearly Trainer of Trainers (TOT) Inservice Professional Development Program. The LEAP project also utilizes a Distance Education approach with service delivery via the Web and Interactive Instructional Television (IITV) to facilitate access to the coursework for rural educators.

Student Developed Curriculum Lessons

DREAMS, BRIDGE, BEST, and LEAP participants develop lessons that not only teach a specific concept but also address the cultural and linguistic diversity of the local student population and design accommodations for any individual special education needs. In many cases, effective strategies which have been used successfully with the general population of students with disabilities can easily be adapted to fit the needs of CLDE students. Student lessons are posted on the program Website to enable not only the program students to exchange and utilize each other's lessons, but also to enable others in far reaching diverse rural communities all over the country to access and download these culturally relevant lessons. Students in the four programs follow a Direct Instruction Lesson Plan Rubric which emphasizes direct linking of cultural context and language background of the CLDE students to the objectives, content, and learning mode of the lesson. Modifications for students with disabilities in the general education classroom and integration of technology are clearly linked to the goals and objectives of the lesson. Examples of culturally relevant thematic lessons developed by the BRIDGE, BEST, and LEAP graduate students include: Native American Basketry (Art, Math, History, Science), Las Hormiguitas (Ants - Ant Multiplication, Ant Families, Life Cycle, ANTonyms), Sheep and Wool (Native American Families, traditions, economics, math), and Celebrations (Animal Pinata, Birthdays, Math, Families).

Use of Distance Education Technology

In all four of these programs, distance education technology (Web-based courses, Email feedback to and from instructors, and Instructional Interactive Television -IITV) is employed to maximize the utilization of the resources of the university's main campus while allowing the students in these rural areas to remain in their local communities to complete their coursework.

There has been considerable interest in the potential advantages of the use of **computer-based technology** in education. Charp (2000) maintains that a number of observations can be safely made:

- Students are becoming freed from the physical boundaries of classrooms and the time restrictions of schedules.
- Students are working at their own pace using network-based materials and diagnostic tools.
- Dynamic databases are emerging that permit students, faculty and administrators to have 24-hour access to financial records, student transcripts, class lectures, assignments, etc. over the Internet.

Through interaction in Web-based courses, university students learn teamwork, group decision-making, and problem identification and problem-solving (Synder, 2000). The goal according to Snyder (2000) with Interactive Group Software is to get students involved in old-fashioned interactivity - human interaction - instead of just clicking buttons on a computer screen. This research influenced the design of the Web courses in DREAMS, BRIDGE, BEST, and LEAP. The Web-based courses in these four programs have been designed to include a high degree of group interaction, reflection, and feedback from one student to another as well as between the instructor and the students.

A major focus of another recent study (Hill & Hannafin, 1997) was the World Wide Web (WWW). This study reported that some prior knowledge and experience in open learning applications, helping learners to construct a functional mental model of the system, and providing searching tips, should increase their chances of success in web-based courses. According to Hill and Hannafin (1997), preliminary interpretations indicate that teaching the strategies for finding information in open information systems like the WWW is prerequisite for success. In light of these findings, all of the DREAMS, BRIDGE, BEST, and LEAP students receive intensive training in the use of technology systems including word processing, email, Web Searches, and specific Web course access, utilization, and pedagogy. This technology training has made a tremendous impact in the students' ability to take full advantage of the computer-based technology available in DREAMS, BRIDGE, BEST, and LEAP.

Additionally, **Email** provides communication between faculty and students in these four programs. For example, in BRIDGE, which involves internship supervision for teachers who are completing certification in Special Education via this program, the participant is in e-mail contact with the university supervisor each week during the semester. The email serves as a medium for the participant to ask questions, get feedback on ideas for lessons (including management and problem solving), and generally maintain a high level of rapport between the university internship supervisor and the BRIDGE participants. The email also serves as a way to help the participants incorporate what they are learning in their content classes with the daily routine in their own classrooms. The university internship supervisor is aware of what content classes the BRIDGE participant is taking and what the requirements of the content classes include. This knowledge of the content classes coupled with knowledge of the participant's own classroom is invaluable and strengthens the quality of the individual feedback communicated via email.

Another relatively new technology approach used in these four programs is teaching the courses via a satellite microwave link **Interactive Instructional Television System (IITV).** Instructors deliver the course from one of the TV classroom sites, and the students receive the class at their local rural site. This system utilizes state of the art technology to transmit and receive courses at sites throughout Arizona. For example, students in the electronic classroom in Yuma or Tuba City see the instructor at the home site electronic classroom and vice versa. Students and faculty can converse and interact in discussion and activities just as if they were in the same classroom. Faculty rotate to each site throughout the semester to provide one-on-one opportunities for before and after class discussion in person.

Training of Trainers

Trainer of Trainers (TOT) is utilized in the three graduate programs, BRIDGE, BEST, and LEAP. Initial steps in integrating the TOT model into the BRIDGE project were taken in Year One of the program. The students collaborated with BRIDGE faculty and staff in delivering TOT at the National ACRES Conference in San Diego. More formal presentation and instruction of the TOT methodology are integrated into Year Two coursework. Three courses (ESE 599A, ESE 599B, ESE 698) have been selected to add specific learning objectives regarding the TOT model. Additionally, each of these courses has a culminating assignment requiring students to prepare and participate in delivery of a TOT module. BEST and LEAP Fellows utilize the TOT model to deliver Professional Development Training in which 200 additional peer teachers from the consortium districts join with the BEST and LEAP Fellows to receive training in best practice strategies for working with ELL students and ELL students with disabilities. In this way, the Fellows not only receive training, but they also become the future consortium district trainers in the area of best practice for teaching LEP/ELL students and LEP/ELL students with disabilities.

Summary

Teacher educators and local school district personnel must be aware of the challenges and promising practices related to preparing teachers to serve exceptional students from culturally diverse backgrounds in rural and remote areas. The teacher preparation programs described in this article are serving culturally diverse students with disabilities in rural areas of Arizona in Yuma, near the Mexico border, and Tuba City on the Navajo Reservation. Currently over 100 students are enrolled in these four programs. A student in one of the graduate programs noted that were it not for this program, she would not be able to earn a Masters Degree as she could not afford to leave her job to attend a traditional program at the university. Several students commented that these programs are helping them teach ALL the students in their classes and ..."what a difference that makes!" DREAMS, BRIDGE, BEST, and LEAP provide diverse models of rural teacher education at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and they strengthen rural teachers' abilities to provide high quality education to rural culturally linguistically diverse exceptional students. All four programs are "Grow Your Own" models which can be replicated and utilized in other rural communities where there are local persons in the community who want to become more knowledgeable and capable of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities.

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SHIFTING ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION PARADIGMS FOR RURAL LEARNERS

Multidimensional issues confront those who live in rural communities. In schools, these problems include consistent misidentification, misassessment, misplacement, and misinstruction/ misintervention because of their racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Ford, Obiakor, and Patton, 1995.)

In their classical work about three decades ago, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) found that a positive relationship exists between teacher expectation, different treatment and student self-fulfilling prophecy. A few years later, Proctor (1984) confirmed that "low expectations are generally associated with minority group membership, low SES (Socioeconomic Status), male gender, nonconformity personality, physical unattractiveness, nonstandard speech patterns, and low achievement" (p.122.) Based on his assertion critical issues that affect students and their parents in rural schools and programs are inexorably linked to assessment and intervention. For example, these students continue to be over represented in special education programs and under represented in gifted programs (Artiles and Trent, 1994); majority of them continue to be labeled as students who have "low" or "negative" self concepts (Obiakor, 1994, 1996, 1999); and, many are consistently among the least likely to profit in school Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000).

Ford, Obiakor, and Patton (1995), Obiakor and Schwenn (1996), and Rotatori and Obi (1999) agreed that teachers tend to make idiosyncratic judgments on students' school and life successes and failures, especially when they come from different racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. With demographic changes and predicted shifts in powers and paradigms, general and special educators must confront issues of assessment and intervention as they explore innovative ways to maximize the academic potential of rural learners. The key question is, how can general and special educators reduce labels generated by prejudicial expectations, discriminatory assessment, and inadequate instruction/intervention and encourage academic productivity of rural learners? In this presentation, I discuss the endemic issues associated with this question and discuss ways to make assessment and intervention relevant to rural learners in the 21st century.

Critical Issues Facing Rural Learners

In general and special education programs, rural learners are consistently at-risk of misidentification, misassessment, misclassification, misplacement, and misinstruction because they behave, look, speak, and learn differently (Ford et al, 1995; Hilliard, 1995); Directly or indirectly, educators fail to respond to intra-individual and inter-individual differences of these students forcing the processes of identification, assessment, classification, placement, and instruction to become loaded with inappropriate assumptions, negative stereotypes, and illusory generalizations (Obiakor, 1996; Obiakor & Algozzine, 1995; Obiakor & Schwenn, 1996). In other words, the traditional ways general and special educators gather and disseminate information about learners for decision-making have problems addressing the inevitable concepts of intra-individual and inter-individual differences. While it is evident that methods of getting such information are supposed to include student interviews, parent interviews, and student observations, academic records, health records, attendance records, and discipline records, educators have continued to rely on other methods that have consistently penalized and created labels and categories for learners (Midgette, 1995; Obiakor & Algozzine 1995; Weissglass, 1998). According to Weissglass:

> The belief that some people are better than others and that success is a matter of genes and independent of societal and familial conditions to perpetrate discrimination. This discrimination falls the hardest on people from lower socioeconomic classes who do not receive equal educational opportunity and on people of color who endure subtle and something blatant racism that affects their learning and self-confidence. (P.45)

Researchers and scholars have continued to decry abuses associated with classifying and labeling students because they look, behave, speak, and learn differently (Duvall, 1994; Gould, 1981; Hilliard, 1995; Okiabor, 1993, 1994, 1998; Samuda & Lewis, 1992). Many urban and rural schools have been associated with drugs, guns, and

crimes. For many of these students, the methods of behavioral assessment remain critical (Karr & Wright, 1885). General and special educators tend to forget that the information that applies to one student in one setting may not apply to him/her in another setting, and even when such in formation is correct, it cannot be generalization to suit all students. Additionally, what works for one teacher/professional may not work for another teacher/professional (Obiakor & Schwenn, 1996). Much of this pedagogical knowledge seems to be lost when issues affecting rural learners come to the limelight. Is it any wonder that general and special educators continue to use a one-method-fits-all technique to identify, assess, place, and instruct rural learners who bring multidimensional "baggage" to school programs? Put another way, traditional labels and categories have penalized and failed to address the unique abilities of rural learners. Surprisingly, educators continue to assign worth to these learners by viewing intelligence as a single entity (see Hilliard, 1993). Based on the aforementioned details, it appears that rural learners are misassessed because of the failure of societal "categories" to respond to contemporary paradigm shifts. One great misconception is that these suburban children are viewed as incapable learners who come from "poor" and disadvantaged backgrounds. These myths have had devastating effect on them, their parents, and communities. As a consequence, many questions remain unanswered in current general and special education practices for learners. For instance, how can powers and paradigms be shifted in the identification, assessment, and instruction of these students? What can general and special educators do to maximize the learning potential of these students? What should the future be?

Identification, Assessment and Instruction in Rural Schools

It has become increasingly apparent that to deal with issues identification, assessment and instruction for rural learners, general and special education practitioners must shift important paradigms. The shift will be facilitated when educational practitioners address identification, assessment, and teaching practices for minority rural learners.

Identifying and Assessing Rural Learners

Over 250 million standardized tests are administered each year to students in America. Anastasi (1976) indicated that these tests compare students' results to the norms. The question is, How feasible is this process considering visible differences of rural learners? Diagnostic, formative and summative evaluations are necessary to determine effectiveness of students and programs. Diagnostic tests are given before programs are initiated, formative tests are given during the operation of programs, and summative tests are given after program operations. All these procedures must be viewed as functional processes. Tests are only samples of behavior; assessment includes much more than testing. In fact, school-based assessment in rural areas should involve consistent collecting and synthesizing of information about a particular problem. In other words, identification and assessment of rural learners should not also be limited to the use of formalized standardized tests for these students Garhart and Garhart (1990) argued that test selecting have ignored societal changes and changes in children's needs similarly Karr and Wright (1995) explained that:

> Although the utilization of traditional assessment is essential for individuals with problem behaviors, a broader based approach appears to be of much use in today's changing society. Educators' awareness of the needs to utilize more contemporary assessment procedures calls for a more holistic approach to address the needs of our ever-changing multicultural society. (p. 64)

There is a great amount of time devoted to the development of identification and assessment tools (Elksnin, Larsen, & Wallace, 1992). However, their utilization has raised considerable questions. For instance, how reliable and valid are these tolls to culturally and linguistically diverse students, especially these who live in rural areas? How have their results been used to interpret accuracy or inaccuracy of these students' behaviors? How have these interpretations been beneficial in identifying, categorizing, and placing these students? Test tools are reliable when they produce consistent results. Ironically, some of these tools have failed to produce consistent results; they sometimes fail to define the construct that they purport to measure. The critical question continues to be; can an instrument measure the construct that it did not define? The dangerous presumption is that everyone understands the correct definitions of constructs measured by these tests. Yet, in reality, the concepts of intra-individual differences rural learners are not given serious attention, and global judgments that ignore cultural interpretations are magnified.

Linking Assessment and Instruction

As noted earlier on, identification and assessment of urban learners should not be undiminished. There is no "one-size-fits-all" assessment or identification technique. Two basic testing procedures are the direct and indirect approaches. Direct approach measures precisely the same skills and outcomes that have been taught in the classroom. This is incredibly important for use with inclusion. Indirect approach involves test items that are usually sampled from a larder domain, and may not be what has actually been taught in the classroom (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000). In this case, rural students are not being tested over relevant information. Clearly, when this happens, indirect tests have little validity in determining achievement of outcomes for an urban student (Obiakor 1995). Since evaluating any child in the classroom setting can be both tedious and global, multidimensional elements of the student's learning environment must be involved. To effectively teach rural learners, a more comprehensive holistic model must be the wave of the future. Karr and Wright (19950 confirmed that educational professionals willing to intervene in less prejudicial ways must acknowledge the following:

1. Information Sources (e.g., teachers, administrators, parents/guardians, children, and other pertinent school personnel).
2. Environment (e.g., home, school, whole class, and structured activities behaviors).
3. Data Sources (e.g., structured interviews, observation, behavior rating scales, psychological test, checklist, and specialized informal/ formal test).
4. Comprehensive Response (e.g., conferences, program design, duration of services, follow-up services, and reassessment of program and service semiannually. (Pp.66-67)

Consequently, avenues for appropriate instruction must be created for all learners. Tests must be examined for adequacy to the urban learners instructional needs before utilization to prevent iatrogenic effects (Grilliot, 1995; Obiakor, 1994; Obiakor & Algozzine, 1995; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000). From start to finish, assessment and intervention processes must be recognized as functional authentic processes to reduce iatrogenic imperatives on rural learners and increase partnerships of classroom teachers, special education teachers, schools psychologists, and other service providers.

Maximizing Learning Potential in Rural Schools

Teacher preparation programs are redefining their roles in building individual and collective growth of all learners. The reasons are simple. Race continues to matter in schools and communities and many educational programs continue to be tied to the apron string of tradition Euro centric educational programs 9Diaz, 1992; Grant & Gomez, 1996; Siccone, 1995; Sleeter, 1992; Smith, 1996).

With the traditional phenomena that predominate teacher preparation programs, the resultant predicaments of rural learners in general and special education programs must begin to infuse (a) demographic changes, cultural relativism, and cultural patterns; (b) concepts of intra- and inter-individual differences; (c) impact of paradigm and power shifts in schools and society; 9d) nondiscriminatory assessment and instruction; 9e) ethics in psychological and educational assessment; (f) the role of information exchange (i.e., news media, books, and technology); (g) the power of words (e.g., psycho educational constructs, models, and meanings); and (h) collaboration, consultation, and cooperation in general and special education programming. Researchers and scholars in teacher preparation programs must also begin to investigate the negative impact of blindness in human differences (James, 1958), and how this blindness influences realistic or unrealistic views on "quality," "goodness," "perfection," "beauty," "intelligence," and "culture."

More specifically, teacher preparation programs must be designed to help rural learners maximize their fullest potential. To achieve this goal, they must be viewed as capable learners. The emphasis must be on exemplary departmental collaboration, consultation, and cooperation. This teamwork behavior should be modeled by pre-service student teachers. It is important that the training that the students receive become multidimensional. Parents and professionals can provide insightful partnerships to make assessment and intervention work for their child. Additionally, teacher preparation programs must rethink their training and certification/licensure procedures.

A 21ST century Vision for Rural Learners

The responsibility for change lies with general and special educators. Rural learners are not beyond redemption-they should be valued as persons and not categorized as nonentities. They bring a lot to the classroom and school programs. Now is the time to prepare for shifts in power and paradigms. It is self-destructive to categorize them, their parents, schools, and communities based on their personal idiosyncrasies, racial identities, cultural beliefs, and socio-economic backgrounds. Rather, rural learners and their parents must be given the opportunity to work with schools and communities. Opportunities for growth must be visible in rural schools and communities.

Summary

In this article, I examined the plight of rural learners in general and special education programs. In more specific terms, I discussed traditional identification, assessments, and intervention issues that consistently magnify this plight and suggested ways to ameliorate these problems. I believe rural learners have the potential to succeed in learning environments where they are appropriately identified, assessed, placed, and taught. I also believe when a person or group of people is viewed as "poor," "deprived," and/or "disadvantaged," it shows an inability to confront real problems of real people. General and special educators cannot assume, that rural students cannot learn and at the same time expect them to perform academic, social, and economic miracles. When identification and assessment fail to respond to individual differences, classification, placement, and instruction seem to be loaded with negative assumptions, denigrating stereotypes, and illusory conclusions.

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NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND THROUGH COLLABORATION: PARENTS AND PROFESSIONALS AS PARTNERS

No child will be left behind when there is positive productive communication between both professionals and parents. Collaboration between the Individualized Education Program (IEP) planning team is a very important factor in the educational success for a child with special needs. [IDEA has recognized the importance of parent participation as a significant part of the IEP team.] The 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have heightened and expanded the role of the parent in the educational process for youth with disabilities. Over the course of several years there has been an expanding collaboration between the state educational agency and the parent training and information center grantees in Nevada. This relationship has developed to expand the involvement of parents in educational processes and to model collaborative opportunities.

The underlying theme for educational reform is consistently embedded in the idea that we want to effect positive change for students, in this case, specifically for students with disabilities. Sontag in 1996 described the linkages that exist in the circles of support available to students. This circle begins with the immediate support to the student provided by family and friends, expands to include those professionals that provide direct support to students and include teachers and other direct service providers. The next level of support includes supporting professionals and expands to distant professionals such as experts that provide critical information to that inner circle of support -- those that develop the educational plans and provide the direct support to the student. Sontag describes the importance of building trust, maintaining positive relationships, and fostering consensus between these individuals that leads to common goals. The work of Sontag and other researchers provides the foundation for us to navigate the complex, multi-level, highly contextual zed educational system that we function in today. We must remain student-centered and utilize these rings of support available to assist students as they move through the educational system.

DeStafano and colleagues wisely remind us that "systemic reform is complex, dynamic and exists in an ever changing political, social and economic context" (DeStafano et al, 1997, pg. 125). The work of DeStafano and the Regional Educational Laboratories Early Childhood Collaborative Network in their resource document, *Continuity in Early Childhood: A Framework for Home, School and Community Linkages*, both target the need to promote home, school, and community partnerships within the context of relying upon a comprehensive approach to establishing and sustaining continuity for children and their families. This focus on collaboration that leads to appropriate transitions is a critical aspect of the collaboration that has developed within the Nevada system. Recommended best practices at both ends of the spectrum support this need for collaboration. The work of the Early Childhood Collaborative Network describes these elements for effective transitions:

- Families are inegrally partners in home, school, and community efforts
- Home, school, and community partners collaboratively share leadership and shape decision making
- Health, social services, and education focus on the full range of needs and circumstances of individual children and their families
- Services are in line with the cultural contexts of the home and the families, and communication is provided in home languages
- Open respect and confidentiality are maintained among home, school and community partners
- Community, home and school partners collaboratively build their knowledge and skills, as well as the capacity of human services
- Developmentally and culturally appropriate education and care services are provided; and
- The efforts of home, school, and community partners are documented, and evaluation information is used to improve policies, programs and practices.

These findings and recommendations are remarkably similar to those found by Hasazi, Furney, and Destefano (2000) who conducted extensive work at the secondary level to determine indicators of success for transition planning for youth with disabilities. They suggest that for effective change to occur the following elements are found and relied upon:

- Student- and family-centered strategies are incorporated system wide
- Effective and substantive interagency collaboration is fostered
- Systemic professional development is facilitated
- Leading occurs in visionary, supportive and inclusive ways
- Reform efforts are coordinated and integrated; and
- Connections are made between local and federal initiatives

Critical to our discussion here is the emphasis on partnerships, collaboration and consensus-building for effective programing for the youth with disabilities that we support and serve. Increased family and student involvement has been determined to play a key role in ensuring successful outcomes for children and youth with disabilities. Educators, family members, and youth must work together in order for students to succeed.

Nevada Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP), the statewide Parent Training and Information Center, provides support and training to parents of children with special needs and the professionals who support them. Nevada PEP was formed in 1991 by concerned parents and professionals, which has been a great exampie of collaboration through out our state. The organization consists of a central office in Las Vegas, Nevada with a satellite office in Reno, Nevada. There is over 400 miles of desert between the two PEP offices. PEP services are designed to educate, empower and encourage parents and professionals, therefore increasing the opportunities for home, community and school success for children with disabilities within 17 school districts, 14 being rural school districts. Nevada PEP has provided workshops and IEP clinics for parents and professionals in Nevada's rural communities to enhance the efforts of collaboration. Recognizing that families of children with disabilities benefit from such support and trainings, federal funds provide support for a "Parent Training Information" center in every state.

The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and the seventeen local school districts in Nevada have always worked collaboratively with parents, families and the organizations developed to support students with disabilities. This partnership has only expanded over the past decade. These collaborations include work at the state level through education agency efforts, legislative committees, the joint development of resource products for families and educators and joint presentations at local, state and national conferences. This collaboration is especially critical in rural communities where there are limited resources.

What are the ways that educational agencies and parents can partner to improve services for youth with disabilities? First, parents and families of students with disabilities need to be included in policy -making efforts at the state and local level. This can occur through the invitation to parents and family members to serve on committees, action-teams, legislative work groups and other organized efforts. It is important that Special Education Advisory Committees be developed that include both parental and professional involvement at the local level to provide opportunities to reach consensus regarding policies and procedures under development.

Secondly, the collaborative development of resource materials for educators and families is both an effective format for modeling but also assures greater understanding and utilization of materials. Nevada PEP and the NDE have developed several resource materials in the area of transition that can be utilized by both professionals and families to the benefit of the youth. "Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There", a resource workbook for transition planning for youth with disabilities, was the first product of our collaboration. The use of this document has been widely implemented throughout the state and also in other communities. These jointly developed resource materials are more accessible and also are held in high esteem just because of the joint nature of their development.

And thirdly, this collaboration has been modeled through joint presentations at the classroom level, at the school district level and at state, regional and national conferences. It is very powerful to have an adult with a disability in tandem with a professional sit down with youth with disabilities and share information, resources and

problem-solving. This modeled collaboration is also a positive experience for both parents and families and professionals. It has the effect of immediately leveling the playing field and making it easier for all involved to communicate and jointly work together. We have seen powerful results from this collaboration.

Professionals working with children with special needs need to be able to effectively communicate with parents. The partnership of the professional and parent is of the most importance for the educational success for children with special needs. When there has be positive communication and collaboration between the parents and professionals understanding the emotions and concerns of the parent, can help the IEP process to become more effective and productive.

Parents are the most important people in the lives of children, providing guidance and direction that their child may become successful. This is especially true when parenting a child with special needs. The role of the parent in the child's educational plan is so important, and yet communication between the professional and parent when there is a disagreement can be somewhat frustrating and difficult. When the lines of communication are broken the child suffers by regressing educationally. It is not always easy for a parent to advocate for their child in a small rural community.

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PARENTS TRAINING PARENTS: A VITAL ROLE FOR INCREASING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Effective school-parent partnerships strengthen children's capacity for meaningful learning and success in school. "Educators can implement praxis to provide an educational environment for parents to become confident and resourceful collaborators in the school-parent partnership" (Smalley & Reyes-Blanes, 2001). The use of parent leadership training has proven to be an effective method of involving parents in their children's education (Smalley & Reyes-Blanes, 2001). As a result, parents are revisiting their own leadership and interactive skills as they represent critical role models for their children. To fortify their efforts, the authors from a metropolitan university and a local school community's leaders became involved in developing a Parent Leadership Training (PLT) program in 1999. Recently, the collaborative team designed the Parent Leadership Training (PLT) Training the Trainer Model to increase parent involvement in their children's education. The authors recruited, prepared and mentored parents to train other parents in the PLT. Moreover, the model is being modified for use with rural parents exclusively. Achievements of this program can be helpful for schools seeking to increase involvement of parents in their child's education. In this paper, the authors will (1) describe the Parent Leadership Training the Trainer Model, (2) identify successes and challenges in implementing the model, and (3) describe the impact of the training on parent trainers.

PLT Training the Trainer Model

In order to train parents, a model was developed to facilitate the process. The four components of the model include:

- Introduction of training session topics (e.g., Trainers as Change Agents, Elements of Effective Presentations, Team Building)
- Co-presentation practice sessions on the content of PLT
- Mentoring sessions to assist trainers with presentation of content
- Videotaping and feedback to improve presentation performances

Successes in Implementing the Model

Trainers experienced the following success in implementing the model. Parents:

- worked diligently to meet the goals in their learning contracts
- changed the material to accommodate their personal styles
- received constructive feedback about the performance and training material after each session
- learned to self-reflect and provide constructive feedback to fellow trainers
- received certification as PLT trainers, becoming more proficient each session
- successfully trained two groups of parents (one in their residential community and one group in a similar community)

Challenges in Implementing the Model

Trainers discovered a variety of challenges to implementing the model. Some of the challenges cited include:

- having limited time to mentor trainers after session
- providing training after having worked a full day
- having too short of sessions for the amount of material covered (the number of sessions needs to be increased)
- instituting too few practice sessions for confidence building
- expanding trainers' comfort zones in using duet co-presentation techniques
- co-presenting with other partners within the cadre
- changing scripts to learn new material

Impact of Training on Parent Trainers

Comments of PLT parent trainers:

"I have been enriched by the experience, having had weeks of the Training the Trainer Workshop. The training process was very intense, educational and well planned with a great training manual. Because of the level and degree of material used in this process, I have gained knowledge about group behavior, teaching techniques, role playing examples, and brainstorming methods that I now use in every walk of my life… church, work, social clubs, and home, where I am in a leadership role. I have been trained, and now I am a better leader and follower" (Mrs. Shirley Washington, 2001).

"The training has offered a personal challenge to me. My beginning was very humble. Therefore, standing in front of an audience to speak overwhelmed me. The training gave me a chance to overcome this phobia. But, equally important, the training opportunity has given me the chance to have an impact on some of our young parents. I am able to share some of my good and bad experiences, as well as some of my dreams and desires for their children."

"Having raised five children in the community and helping them get a good education causes me to be able to relate to other parents' concerns. However, I also believe this gives me a great deal of credibility and this is taken into consideration when I share information with other parents. I believe that the opportunity I have to train other parents will help shape and mold their thinking and their conduct" (Mr. Samuel Butler, Jr., 2001).

"The training was very challenging as well as encouraging to me, because it gave me a sense of confidence and pride to know that I am one of the tools being used to make a difference in my community. Because of the training on adult learning theory, I have learned how to respond to adult behavior in a positive way" (Mrs. Renita Only, 2001).

"The training impacted me in different ways. First, it positively affected my ability to communicate with others in sharing ideas and different techniques to get results. Through this, it gave me the confidence to pick up on all the things I was missing in my life to excel in a corporate environment (e.g., reassurance of the level of knowing I could be competitive). Second, it put me on a different playing field, which allowed me to build character."

"Third, it has given me a drive to stop sitting back and settling for just anything, according to the school system's word. Now, I am in a challenging position. Fourth, I sense a level of respect for me as a teacher, from my own people. It appears that the parents see African American people can be effective leaders within their neighborhood."

"It's like my daddy always says, 'It's better to teach a man how to fish than to give a man a fish.' This is how I view having had the Training the Trainer Workshop. Dr. Smalley taught me to fish. Now, I'm teaching other groups how to fish" (Mr. Samuel I. Butler, 2001).

"This training has impacted my life and my children's lives, because it has provided me with the knowledge and the skills to insure my children are successful educationally. I want to share and teach my neighbors and other communities the same things I learned. I strongly believe that it "takes a whole village to raise a child" and I want to be a part of that village. I believe the knowledge and skills I will share with other parents will influence their children's educational success and cause their children to be better citizens. Hopefully, the children will get better jobs and come back and give back to their communities" (Ms. Michelle Hester, 2001).

"The training made me get out of my comfort zone, stop procrastinating on everything, build confidence and act like I know exactly what I am doing. I learned how deal with people as they go through adult learning stages. I know how to create a safe learning environment and communicate on a more professional level. More importantly, I learned what it takes to be a good trainer/facilitator and how to get the job done effectively. This experience has given me an opportunity to give something back to my community. The information I learned is essential to everyday life – at church, on the job, as well as in role modeling for children" (Ms. Sonya Rackard, 2001).

Summary

Improving school-parent partnerships is a critical issue in education today (Buttery, T.J., & Anderson, P.J., 1999). Parents, the primary role models for their children, must be actively involved in helping to build strong relationships to further enhance their children's education.

When parents participate in programs that encourage them to revisit their own leadership and interactive skills, they become more assured and resourceful collaborators in the school-parent partnership. Educators can play a vital role in recruiting, preparing and mentoring parents to increase parental involvement in education. The PLT Training the Trainer Model has proven to be an effective strategy in preparing parents to use their leadership skills to train other parents to become more involved in the children's education.

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PARTNERING WITH LATINO MIGRANT FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES: A CHALLENGE, A MISSION

The unstable social, political, and economical climate in Latin America stimulates the influx of Latino immigrants into the United States every year. The rapidly growing number of Latino migrant families in the nation impacts the demographics of our school population as their children gain access to public education (Williams, 1992). Conversely, while the face of our public education is becoming dramatically diverse, the teacher force remains mostly composed of white females from the mainstream culture.

Children of migrant farm workers face more risk factors for school failure than other immigrant children (Menchaca & Ruiz-Escalante, 1995). Risk factors correlated with school failure among this population include 1) high mobility and interrupted schooling, 2) poverty, and 3) lack of access to schooling. Students from culturally diverse backgrounds are over represented in special education classrooms while they are suffering form disproportionately low rates of school achievement (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002; Patton, 1998). In spite the constant questioning about the appropriateness of the pedagogical methodologies and the equity issues regarding the education of migrant students, it is not uncommon for teachers to frequently attribute children's school failure to a lack of parental involvement in the education process.

Many teachers conceive parental involvement as preparing students for school, attending school activities and meetings, and responding favorably to teachers' requests (Lareau, 1989). These expectations easily translate into demands as teachers of children with disabilities attempt to establish a partnership with parents to appropriately serve and attend to the child with special needs. Teachers' expectations and demands regarding parental involvement could lead into conflicts as teachers interact with Latino migrant parents of children with disabilities.

Latino migrant parents of children with disabilities face multiple challenges. Like other migrant families, they must attempt to satisfy the basic family needs, cope with a cultural and linguistic environment extraneous to them, and adapt to the unique lifestyle of a migrant worker. The presence of a disability in their child places additional demands as they try to provide for the special needs of their child with disabilities. For example, teachers require parental involvement and active participation in their child's education in order to attend the child's special educational needs.

As Latino migrant workers attempt to satisfy the basic needs of their families, their daily circumstances may prevent them in fulfilling the envisioned parental involvement demands. Although most migrant parents want their children to be successful in school, their inability to respond in the traditional way, leads teachers into believing that these migrant parents are disengaged and do not value the education of their children (Lareau, 1989).

Some Latino migrant parents are aware of teachers' expectations regarding their level of school involvement and participation. Moreover, these parents must deal with the multiple barriers that impede their participation in school meetings and activities, and in assisting their children with schoolwork. Cultural and linguistic differences, high mobility rates, time constraints, and feelings of isolation, are some of the multiple factors that may hinder parental involvement among the Latino migrant population. Nonetheless, these parents could contribute to their child's education as they represent highly valued emotional and motivational resources (Martinez, Velazquez, 2000).

To develop a successful parent involvement program with Latino migrant families of children with disabilities, it is necessary to recognize that the traditional approach to parental involvement may fail given the unique characteristics of the Latino migrant workers' lifestyle (Valdes, 1996). In the following section strategies and ideas to enhance parental involvement among this population are briefly described.

A challenge, a mission

As teachers face the challenge to satisfy the needs and demands of the increasing number of Latino migrant students with disabilities in their classrooms, it is imperative to prepare them appropriately to meet the challenges and increase the success rate of these children. Although schools face distinct issues that respond to their unique settings and student populations, there are several general strategies or suggestions that could enhance parent-teacher partnerships among Latino migrant families.

As in any partnership, both parties are equally important and play a critical role. Therefore, teachers and parents must participate equivalently in this partnership for it to be a successful one. Although parity in the level of participation should be a goal, it may be an unrealistic one given the multiple challenges faced by the Latino migrant families. Consequently, teachers' initiative and leadership will be decisive in establishing a successful partnership. The strategies and suggestions described below are mostly for teachers and school personnel, yet it is not intended to portray the Latino migrant families as passive or incapable of taking a leading role. In addition, the challenges addressed in this paper are considered critical yet not an exhaustive discussion of the multiple challenges faced by this population.

Cultural and linguistic differences

Teachers' beliefs, attitudes and values, the essence of subjective culture, will most likely influence their classroom practices and interactions (Banks, 1993). Therefore, teachers who are serving students from diverse backgrounds must become aware of their personal beliefs and biases. Instruction that is insensitive to cultural and linguistic differences or is blinded by an equity blindfold could only intensify the mismatch between teacher and student contributing to the failure of the latter in making adequate progress in the educational system (Harry, 1992).

Cultural differences could affect parent-teacher partnerships and communication. Teachers should become knowledgeable and sensitive to the Latino migrant family lifestyle and the challenges they face (Bradford, 1995). Migrant families are faced with an extraneous and bureaucratic educational system lead by educational professionals with little or no representation of Spanish speaking personnel (Lynch, & Hanson, 1998). Hence, school personnel must provide appropriate information in the families' native language to enhance their opportunity to navigate and participate in the educational system while eliminating the feeling of intimidation frequently expressed by these families. This becomes more critical for parents of children with disabilities as they must be involved in the decision making process for the appropriate educational placement and program planning of their children.

High mobility and interrupted schooling

One of the major challenges teachers of Latino migrant students face is the families' high mobility rate. Migrant families have seasonal jobs that respond to the agricultural crops and thus, students are constantly being relocated. Frequent school changes represent a challenge for the school system as teachers attempt to integrate the new student and document student progress.

When responding to the families' high mobility rate, teachers must be flexible in the school calendars to accommodate the incoming student. Developing a welcoming unit as a way to introduce and assess the child on skills and knowledge pertaining to the given grade level could facilitate the integration of the student to the group. Collecting and keeping an accurate academic portfolio to depict the students' academic performance becomes critical as the student relocates to different schools. Grades and other reports may not portray the reality about the student level of achievement and performance resulting in inappropriate placement and instruction.

Time Constraints

Parental involvement in education as conceived by many teachers requires parents to attend and participate in multiple school activities. The unique lifestyle of the migrant families is characterized by long working hours that begin at dawn and end at dusk. Most migrant workers are transported to the fields as they lack their own means of transportation. Consequently, to attend school activities during the week becomes an unfeasible task. Teachers who want to ensure parental participation among this population must consider evening or weekend activities as it best responds to the families' time constraints. Providing childcare and transportation will also increase the likeliness of

parents to participate in school activities. Schools should promote home visits and consider celebrating school activities at centers within the families' community to increase the number of participants. It is important as well to consider the participation and involvement of extended family members when planning these activities.

Isolation

It is not uncommon for families who migrate to feel isolated in their new environment. Families who migrate may face environmental, economic, and sociocultural transformations (Blank & Torecilha, 1998). Language barriers and culture shock are among the factors that affect their integration to the mainstream community. Teachers who are aware of this situation could reach out to the families and the community rather than assuming a passive role. To demonstrate their interest and sensitivity to the migrant families, teachers could contact the corresponding social services agencies in the community and serve as a liaison to provide families with information about the resources available in the community. Teachers could also develop partnerships with the agricultural industries to promote activities to enhance families' knowledge of their new environment and to promote the further development of their skills and talents.

In the classroom, teachers could provide social skills education to facilitate student interactions in their new social environment. School curriculum should also reflect students' cultures, values, and experiences to foster a sense of acceptance and belongingness. Parents could assist in this endeavor by providing items that reflect their cultural background as well as their new lifestyle. Schools could observe and celebrate the community's festivities and historical events as a mean of fostering social interactions and breaking down isolation barriers.

Conclusion

The lack of representation of Latino teachers serving the Latino migrant student population poses a challenge to mainstreamed teachers as they attempt to build healthy partnerships with parents to enhance students' success rates in education. Parental involvement among Latino migrant families is hindered by multiple factors that are intrinsic to their unique lifestyle. It is critical that teachers understand the conditions of such lifestyle and the strategies they could use to facilitate their partnership.

Incorporating resources to enhance the level of parental involvement among the Latino migrant population is a powerful way of validating the significant contributions of the migrant farmworker to their community and our nation. Teachers who become aware of their own cultural values and beliefs and who become knowledgeable about the Latino migrant lifestyle/culture are more likely to succeed in their goal to increase parental involvement. Efforts in overcoming the barriers that hinder parental involvement among this population will only ensure that all students receive the appropriate education they are entitled to receive in a nation that so highly values democracy and equity.

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ALTERNATIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER CERTIFICATION PRACTICES

Critical shortages of special education teachers who are fully qualified for the positions they hold exist in all fifty states (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001). This typically results in teachers of arguably the most difficult to educate students being employed outside their primary field of teaching expertise, teaching on emergency authorizations, or pursuing temporary teacher eligibility status while pursuing approved programs of graduate study. The National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education at the Council for Exceptional Children has systematically collected data on the recruitment and retention issues inherent in the special education teacher shortage phenomenon. The National Clearinghouse has identified that the magnitude of shortages is becoming more significant despite the efforts of most states to provide alternative routes to teacher certification in special education. The difficulties found in the lack of reciprocity between and among states on the common standards for special education teacher certification further contribute to these critical shortages and suggest the potential for a national solution to increasing the supply of qualified special educators to meet the needs of students with disabilities. This need has been documented on a national basis (Boe, Cook Bobbitt, & Terhanian, 1998) through data that demonstrate nearly 10% of all special education teachers are not fully qualified for their positions compared to 5.5% of teachers in general education fields.

The issues of quality personnel preparation and the capacity of traditional teacher preparation programs to meet the need for adequate numbers of special education teachers has been widely debated in the past decade. Sindelar & Marks (1993) found no difference between alternative special education teacher certification programs compared to traditional teacher preparation programs on teaching performance measures. A variety of models of special education teacher certification/licensure programs have been described in the professional literature that describe positive outcomes for such programs when weighed against teacher performance criteria (Edelen-Smith & Sileo, 1996; Gaynor & Little, 1997; Rosenberg & Rock, 1994).

Miller, Brownell, & Smith (1999) investigated the reasons why special education teacher stay in the special education assignment, transfer to another setting, or leave the special education teaching profession. Their results indicated that teachers left special education primarily due to insufficient certification, perceptions of high stress, and perceptions of poor school climate. The issue of retention inevitably has been traced to the level of preparedness and effective performance levels of beginning special educators (Maroney, 2000).

The Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children has acknowledged the significance of the alternative certification dilemma for teacher preparation institutions as the demand for qualified personnel outstrips the supply. Siders (2001) identified a double standard that confronts the traditional teacher preparation programs found in Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) that operate under accreditation restrictions that suppress program innovation in teacher education. While traditional teacher preparation programs are being held to higher standards through federal Title II mandates that link performance of program graduates to success in the classroom, alternative certification programs have been largely unchecked. The solution to this issue is complex, and must be tied to rigorous entry criteria for applicants to alternative programs, availability of supporting processes and appropriate content geared to the expectations of receiving schools, and outcome measures that are performance-based and link preparation to the demonstration of what teachers know and can do.

The guiding purpose behind this investigation was to determine whether a market exists to provide alternative special education teacher certification across the country, and what types of services and/or products were required to address this need. To address this purpose, a determination of the extent of need for qualified special education teachers to meet the states' critical shortage areas for special education teachers was conducted. Specific attention was given to the types of existing alternative certification/licensure programs in special education across selected states, the content and processes identified to implement these programs, and whether a nationally developed model of alternative certification/licensure was viewed favorably as an option to meet identified needs.

Method

Data Sources

A sample of respondents from fourteen selected states was identified to inform a survey of current practices and needs in the area of alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers. A set of survey questions was developed based on a review of related literature on alternative certification practices that prepare special education teachers. These questions were reviewed and validated through consultation with the professional development staff at an established professional development organization with strong research-based products and services in the area of special education teacher education.

The sample was purposely selected to secure information from seven states that represented large population centers in primarily urban environments, and seven states that contained significantly rural, geographically diverse populations. The seven primarily urban states were New York, Florida, California, Texas, Michigan, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. The significantly rural states were Oregon, Arizona, Montana, Colorado, Nevada, Alabama, and Oklahoma. While urban centers and rural environments existed in each of the states surveyed, the balance of highly concentrated population centers and significantly rural settings provided a balanced perspective on national needs in the area of alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers.

Design

The respondents in each state were identified by position title of State Improvement Grant (SIG) Director, or Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) Coordinator in states that did not have a state improvement grant in operation. The state improvement grant program is a federal initiative through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to promote collaborative partnerships and systems change in state professional development systems. Each state that does not administer a state improvement grant is required to implement a comprehensive system of personnel development plan with the same mission of promoting effective professional development systems. The respondents were identified as key informants based on their expert knowledge of personnel shortages in the area of special education teachers and their familiarity with alternative certification/licensure practices in special education teacher preparation. In some instances it was necessary to obtain follow-up information by contacting the State Director of Teacher Credentialing or the equivalent for additional data.

The intent of the telephone surveys was to gain insight into the feasibility of offering a national model of alternative special education teacher certification/licensure, obtain data on the extent of program need, and determine the types of content and processes that would be valuable in the delivery of such a program. The structured set of interview questions was developed to determine the nature of alternative special education teacher certification practices in each state. In addition, the standards that have been developed along with the process and content that address these standards was solicited from each respondent. Specific probes were used to determine the degree to which the selected states would be supportive of a national model and approach to alternative teacher certification/licensure in the area of special education, and the degree to which such a program would require individualized components prior to adoption.

Analysis Procedures

All responses to survey questions were tabulated and compared for each of the survey questions. Individual differences and unique aspects reported from the various respondents were also reported by state.

Results and Discussion

Do states currently offer alternative routes or processes to teacher certification/licensure for Special Education Teachers?

All but three of the survey states offer an approved program of alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers. Colorado, Michigan, and Montana reported that an alternative program for special education teacher preparation was not available. Illinois reported that legislation was passed to create such a program through

the sponsorship of institutions of higher education, but none has pursued this program to date. Montana reported the operation of a collaborative special education endorsement project in cooperation with the state university teacher preparation institutions. Colorado indicated that alternative teacher certification/licensure exists for twenty different endorsement areas, but not special education. Michigan reported that alternative special education teacher preparation was being actively discussed by members of the State Improvement Grant team, and would be recommended to the legislature for future adoption.

The remaining ten states that were actively offering alternative certification/licensure programs to prepare special education teachers described a variety of approaches, including programs sponsored by local school districts, institutions of higher education, and the state education agency. New York, California, and Pennsylvania reported recently adopted legislation that was designed to provide additional options for alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers.

A variety of providers have been identified by these selected states to administer alternative special education teacher certification/licensure programs. Among the providers, an increasing number of local school districts and partnership arrangements between local school districts and institutions of higher education were found to be the most active organizations in the delivery of alternative certification/licensure of special educators. Most states pointed to regional shortages that have been identified. The most pressing shortages were demonstrated in rural, geographically remote areas of the state as well as the urban, inner city areas where teaching vacancies were difficult to fill.

What are the numbers and desired specializations of Special Education Teachers who are not fully qualified?

The collection of data that document the extent of shortage of special education teachers is difficult to access in most states. The actual number of special educators who are not fully qualified continues to rise while the attention to recruitment and retention initiatives receives increasing attention. Each state maintains a slightly different approach to documenting the extent and severity of teacher shortages in special education.

The area of greatest need that was identified across the targeted states was some variation of a special education generalist teacher. A variety of terms were expressed to identify this area of need including: Special Education Mild/Moderate Needs Teacher; Special Education Generalist; Cross-categorical Special Education Teacher; Special Education Resource Teacher; Varying Exceptionalities Teacher; and Special Education Resource Specialist. In states that continue to be categorically based in special education teacher specializations, the critical shortages of teachers of students with emotional disabilities was the greatest area of need, followed by teachers of students with learning disabilities. The concept of regional differences within states with respect to personnel shortages was a theme that was frequently mentioned by the respondents. The needs of inner city school districts in urban school districts may be very different from the needs of school districts in rural and isolated regions of a given state.

What are the expectations for content and process considerations in alternative certification/licensure programs for special education teachers?

Several respondents commented on the challenges that have developed in an era when the focus on higher standards for teacher preparation programs seems to contradict the exacerbating critical shortages of teachers in high demand areas such as special education. The concern for quality was expressed by virtually every state that mentioned national accreditation through the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) as a quality benchmark and desirable expectation for alternative certification/licensure approaches. Each respondent alluded to the complex political challenges involved with alternative teacher certification efforts and consistently pointed out the difficulties posed to institutions of higher education for participation in such initiatives. In the words of one State Improvement Grant Director: "How do you have an NCATE approved alternative certification program since our state is an NCATE state. Universities are concerned and school districts are very supportive of alternative certification."

Many respondents viewed the expansion of alternative teacher certification of special education teachers as inevitable. As another State Improvement Grant Director voiced this sentiment: "Those who were trained in the old school of teacher education had reservations about special education alternative teacher certification. The demand

for alternative certification has made this a necessity. Many alternatively certified special education teachers do an excellent job once they're out." Another respondent was even more adamant: "Alternative teacher certification is the wave of the future in special education. Local districts need some flexibility in attracting and retaining special education teachers. I expect tremendous resistance from universities."

All fourteen respondents rated the eight categories of knowledge and skills for beginning special education teachers that have been identified by the Council for Exceptional Children. The results provided little variance in the reported importance of each category. In general, the categories that garnered the most support were: assessment diagnosis and evaluation; instructional content and practice; planning and managing the teaching and learning environment; and managing student behavior and social interaction skills. This was not a statistically significant difference, but one that may have some practical significance for the identification of essential knowledge and skills for special education teachers.

The importance of performance-oriented programs for alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers was a prevailing theme provided by respondents on the issues of content and process. According to one State Improvement Grant Director: "Performance-based measures are essential, and the performance needs to be documented. A variety of support systems should be identified to monitor and coach the performance of program participants including mentorship, portfolio, observation, and apprenticeship."

Finally, most states reported that their existing special education teacher preparation programs did not supply the capacity to meet the demands for special education teachers across the state. In states that reported adequate capacity to meet the projected demand, a number of factors (e.g., regional differences, geographical preferences of program graduates, out-of-state recruitment, etc.) resulting in an identified shortage of qualified special education teachers. The large majority of states responding reported that their schools were importing potential teacher candidates from other states. One state reported exploring the possibility of recruiting qualified teachers internationally from the Philippines.

Would a nationally developed model of alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers be useful in addressing your state's critical shortage of special education teachers?

The context of the survey established the tone for responses to questions about the development of a national model of alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers. This preliminary statement reads as follows: "Sopris West Educational Services is considering the development of a national model of alternative certification/licensure of entry-level special education teachers. Prior to moving forward with this potential initiative, Sopris West Educational Services is conducting a needs assessment to determine the extent of need for such a program and make certain that the program would meet the needs of state education agencies."

The responses to this collection of questions were encouraging from the stand points of either supporting a national model of alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers, or expressing interest in exploring the possibilities. The ability to deliver a national model through online instructional approaches was seen as the major opportunity for success, along with the cultivation of appropriate partnerships to support the organization and delivery of content and supportive processes. The major potential barrier was identified as lack of university support and/or acceptance of such a model. The equivocal nature of many responses to the potential for a national model is presumed to be the product of lack of specificity in the concept of a national model of special education teacher certification/licensure through an alternative model. Clearly state education agencies would need to know more precisely the components of such a model to determine whether it fits the context and identified needs for alleviating special education personnel shortages before making a commitment.

Summary Recommendations

In reviewing the themes and responses to the questions posed regarding the need for a national model of alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers along with the context for operation in the selected states, a number of relevant recommendations were identified. These recommendations are offered as a summary in no priority order or ranking of relative importance:

(1) Most states have already adopted procedures for alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers. The procedures are under-utilized for most instances, and could be developed within the context of a national model that addresses identified state needs.

(2) The absolute numbers of special education teachers who are not fully qualified varies tremendously across the selected states. Any program that would be developed needs to consider the regional differences that exist in critical shortage areas. The urban inner city schools and rural or geographically remote schools provide the greatest areas of need.

(3) While differences were noted in the types of special education teachers in greatest demand across states, the two categories that demonstrated the most consistent demand were the cross-categorical 'generalist' group of special education teachers and the categorically based 'specialist' group of special education teachers for students with emotional disabilities.

(4) There were many models of special education alternative certification/licensure program delivery across the states, with some combination of local school district and university partnership being the most widely supported process.

(5) While many states have identified their own set of competencies and standards for beginning special education teachers, the framework provided by the Council for Exceptional Children's Common Core of Knowledge and Skills Essential for Beginning Special Education Teachers provides an acceptable starting point in the development of a national model.

(6) The processes for supporting, coaching, and supervising alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers are equally important to the content and delivery of the professional knowledge base.

(7) Online delivery of a national model of alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers was seen as a critically valuable component to meet identified needs.

(8) The complexities of special education teacher supply and demand issues are not easily addressed through any single strategy. The competing requirements of quality program standards espoused by accreditation agencies versus the convenience provided by alternative models must be balanced to ensure competent teachers for students with disabilities.

(9) Institutions of higher education that offer traditional teacher preparation programs in special education were widely referenced as potential barriers to implementation of new approaches to special education teacher certification/licensure or potential opportunities to enhance the effectiveness and partnerships of new initiatives. A university presence appears to be essential to the success of any national model of alternative special education teacher certification/licensure program.

(10) It is recommended that a framework be developed which outlines the major components of both content and process that would become the basis for a national model of alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers. This framework would allow states to react with greater precision to the appropriateness of such a model to the individual state context and potential for adoption.

An additional dimension to assessing the needs of selected states for a national model of alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers would be the collection of information from State Directors of Teacher Licensure/Credentialing. In many instances the offices of teacher certification/licensure was described as being separate from the state education agency. The administrators responsible for the total picture of educator licensing and certification may provide additional insights into the complexities of individual state systems and offer guidance in the development of a national model that meets the reciprocity requirements that are often cited as desirable in addressing critical shortages of special education teachers.

The interview process sparked considerable interest from the state education agency professionals who were selected to participate in this survey. Many respondents expressed an interest in receiving a copy of the study results. A final recommendation was offered that, when appropriate, the results of this study should be disseminated to state education agencies to stimulate further discussion, potential interest, and support for a national model of alternative certification/licensure of special education teachers. It was clear from the tenor of responses that the concept of alternate approaches to special education teacher preparation is a politically charged subject in many states. A wide range of tangible and potential opponents to this type of teacher preparation approach has been identified in each state. It would be advisable to obtain information on the views of the most likely critics of alternate routes to teacher preparation in selected venues.

> "The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing at the right place, but to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment." --Dorothy Nevill
>
> "If you are never scared or embarrassed or hurt, it means you never take any chances." --Julia Sorel

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BRIDGING THE GAP: PARAEDUCATORS TO TEACHERS

Rural school districts have their own set of distinct challenges in providing special education services to children who qualify for them. Resources and resource personnel can be scarce, or in some cases, non-existent. Additionally, although many paraeducators currently working in classrooms for children with disabilities have the dream to become a certified special education teacher, many, especially those who live and work in rural areas, do not have the opportunity to attend college or university to achieve their goals. These two challenges for rural communities, scarcity of highly trained special education staff and lack of opportunity to go to college, can be answered in one solution; developing collaborative "user friendly" teacher education programs for rural special education paraeducators that originate in local community colleges.

Why Recruit Paraeducators?

Many have noted that "the utilization of the paraeducator to support the education of individuals with disabilities has increased dramatically over the past 10 years" (p. 45) even though there is little research to document this trend (Giangreco, Edelmam & Broer, 2001). Although some lament this state of affairs (Brown, Knight, Ross & Ziegler, 1999), one positive aspect of this situation is that the pool from which to recruit teachers has expanded as well.

Several factors make it attractive to recruit paraeducators for certified teaching positions. First, paraeducators usually represent the culture or cultures of the surrounding community (French & Pickett, 1997) and are committed to residing in and enriching their community. In the current state of affairs in public school education, one of the most often cited challenges is attracting culturally diverse teachers to work with students of backgrounds of equal diversity (Obiakor, 2001; Savelsbergh, 1994).

Additionally, paraeducators have experience in special education classrooms, and already know that they are drawn to and find satisfaction in working with children with disabilities (French & Pickett, 1997). They are also aware of the hierarchies and some of the politics involved in working in public education; the challenges, the social culture, and "working the system".

The teacher education project described here is a collaborative effort among a community college, local school districts, and a private four-year college that offers special education teacher certification courses at the undergraduate level. The program was designed to be respectful of the "on the job learning" that many of the paraeducators had already undergone and their community college coursework in special education. The primary focus was to provide a quality, content-filled program in a user-friendly package.

The Initial Collaboration

The PEP-C (ParaEducators of Pinal County) project was conceived of as a result of a call for proposals from OSEP, the federal government office that is responsible for teacher training and other grants in the area of special education. Representatives from Central Arizona College and the largest local school district in the county served by the college, co-wrote the grant that proposed development of a "Paraeducator Certificate" of 20 credits for a minority serving community college in a rural area. The 13 other school districts in the county were involved with the grant as part of an advisory committee. The Grant was funded as of school year 2000-2001.

The courses were developed by professionals in the field who possessed a minimum of a master's degree and 10 years teaching experience. The curriculum was developed using guidelines for paraeducators that are stated by the Council for Exceptional Children. Two courses were offered in the spring semester of 2001, "The Role of the Paraeducator", and "Introduction to Special Education". Both courses were offered in a distance-learning format

using interactive television. Three campus sites within the county were linked together, giving students the ability to stay relatively close to home.

The Students

Sixty-five paraeducator/students were enrolled in the program in December of 2000. Sixty of the initial 65 students were paraeducators or other personnel working in local school districts; other personnel included substitute teachers, office staff, cafeteria staff and bus drivers. The remaining 5 students were working outside of the field of education altogether, but most had had some previous experience working in public schools as paraeducators. One individual, Greg, who will be discussed at length later on, confessed that he could not afford to remain a paraeducator, although he liked the work, due to the low rate of pay. He was working as a carpet and tile installer and was thrilled at the prospect of financial aid and other support in becoming a certified special education teacher.

The Collaboration Expansion

Early on in the process of recruiting participants for the project, it became apparent that many of the students enrolling were not going to be satisfied with a Paraeducator Certificate. Many, in fact most, of the students enrolled in the program were interested in pursuing full teacher certification. This was good news to the newly hired director. Surely one of the three state universities would be happy to partner with an accredited state community college in developing a creative program to meet the needs of these prospective teachers and their rural communities. This was naivety at it's best.

After several frustrating conversations and a few formal meetings involving Deans and Presidents, the director realized that none of the three state universities was interested in a partnership. Barriers included insisting that students travel long distances to urban campuses and disinterest in offering special education certification at the bachelors level. It was time to go private.

The director had worked with Prescott College, a private teacher certification-granting college as an adjunct instructor for many years. The college uses a guided independent study format that is truly individualized for each student. Local mentors are recruited for each student who meet with students weekly, either individually or in small groups. Individual contracts are drawn up between teacher and mentee according to guidelines set by the college.

Additional Conversations

Many of the school districts were wary of partnering with a private college. Why couldn't we partner with one of the 3 state universities? Would the courses be as good? Would the teachers produced be as prepared?

Several meetings were held to address the concerns of the districts and the following factors helped the districts to see how much more "user-friendly" the private college's service would be to the school districts and their prospective teachers.

1) The private college would recognize the some of the courses in the Paraeducator Certificate Program (e.g. Introduction to Special Education) as equivalent to their courses at the junior level.
2) The private college would recruit district recommended teachers as mentors for their classes.
3) Student teaching could be done within an employee's district.
4) Students who completed the Paraeducator Certificate with an Associates degree would be able to complete their upper division coursework and teacher certification within 3 semesters.
5) The college offered a Life Experience Portfolio option for highly trained students to write up their experiences to be evaluated for course credit.

Thus a partnership was formed among a community college, 14 rural school districts and a private teacher certification granting college. The following presents one student's experiences in the collaborative program.

Greg's Experience

Greg had worked as a paraeducator in a local school district as a one-to-one aide for a child with cerebral palsy. Although he felt as though he was just thrown into the position with little training, he really enjoyed working

with his student. He also enjoyed the times when he was asked to work in a self-contained special education classroom for children with learning and other mild disabilities.

Greg followed his student with disabilities to all kinds of therapy sessions, so many that he reports that he actually was able to assist the student in regular classroom situations for a very limited amount of time each day. Greg was learning "on the job" and although he enjoyed the work and learning more and more about students with special needs every day, the fact remained that he really couldn't really afford to keep working as a teacher's aide. He did consider going to school to become a teacher as he was almost finished with his Associates Degree, but there were several barriers to that becoming a reality. First there was the question of finances and secondly, no program existed that would grant a bachelor's degree in special education that would allow him to remain living and working in the county as he completed his coursework.

Greg heard about the PEP-C program from another paraeducator who worked in the district that he had been forced to leave. At first he thought that the program might not meet his needs, since he didn't want to stop at earning a paraeducator certificate- he wanted full fledged teacher certification. After a conversation with Greg, the director pursued, in earnest, the private college about developing a collaboration. Greg had been a valued paraeducator with the school district, with a job promised just as soon as he could obtain certification. It was time for the collaboration to become a reality.

Registration for the courses at Central Arizona College and Prescott College went smoothly. His classes at CAC were finished in one semester and a summer session and then it was on to Prescott. Although Greg traveled once to Tucson (an hours drive) and once to Prescott (a two and a half hours drive) for registration and orientation, he was relieved that for the bulk of his coursework, he would be meeting with local mentors on a one-to-one basis. He is given the option of driving to Tucson once a week for a class (the mentor will send materials to him if he is unable to travel), and he tries to go as often as possible, which has turned out to be almost every week.

In Greg's opinion there are several really great things about the PEP-C program and it's collaboration with Prescott College: 1) Grant money to help with tuition and books; 2) Classes to help paraeducators learn more about how to work with students with special needs; 3) A program that recognizing paraeducators as an important team member 4) The opportunity to work one to one with local mentors, that allows students to be active members of their learning team; 5) The flexibility to go to school around work schedules; and 6) The opportunity to use actual school materials, policies, and procedures in coursework. Another positive by-product is that Greg has reentered the school environment as a paraeducator while he is finishing his certification coursework.

Discussion

It is difficult to ignore the challenges associated with the countrywide special education teacher shortage. Although some alternative certification programs have been developed at the university level, many require students to enter with a bachelor's degree and are less than user-friendly for rural communities. In a rural area, it is important to take advantage of the resources that are currently available. For this reason, community colleges can be the most reasonable place to begin for some prospective teachers; particularly those with little or no college coursework and those who might require some developmental courses.

Because the collaboration described above had its' beginnings as a federally funded grant, others in rural districts with accessible community colleges might feel that the money to back such a program was unavailable to them. We must be creative in this age of special education scarcity. Districts must be willing to help chosen paraeducators; states must be willing to fund community colleges, and paraeducators themselves must be willing to take some of the financial burden themselves in form of low interest government loans. Continuing to collaborate in creative ways will be the way to a future that consists of an adequate number of professionally prepared teachers in rural areas.

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EVALUATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEAMING IN A RURAL UNIVERSITY CLINICAL EXPERIENCE USING THREE INSTRUCTOR-DESIGNED INSTRUMENTS

Over the past decade, a National shortage of qualified teachers has been well documented in the education literature. This shortage impacts rural special education because openings may be more difficult to fill in rural districts, causing a number of teachers to serve on emergency or waiver of certification status (Boe, Bobbit, & Terhanian, 1998; Lemke, 1994). Faced with this teacher shortage and the need for school reform, collaboration and consultation among teachers is required for successful problem solving and whole school viability (Friend and Cook, 1990).

Another reason for the growing need for collaboration is the increasing presentation of diversity in student needs. There is a national trend toward using teacher collaboration to solve various learning and behavioral problems in public schools. This trend continues in importance because students in public schools are continually presenting more diverse needs, and no one teacher possesses all the expertise necessary to address the many and varied issues that emerge in classrooms (Johnson, Pugach, & Devlin, 1990).

Collaborative consultation empowers educators, parents, and students. Collaboration has been common in schools even before becoming popular on a broad basis because of the historic need in rural areas to share scant resources (Martin & Williams, 2000). Therefore the preparation of pre-service and in-service teachers to participate in and contribute to team decision-making for students with diverse and exceptional needs is especially imperative in rural areas.

Team collaboration requires redefinition of roles and structures in conjunction with reflection on practice (York, Kronberg, & Doyle, 1995). Team development occurs in stages (Joiner, 1993). Each stage adds a dimension to the team's effectiveness, efficacy, and efficiency.

In addition, at all levels of education, there is a focus on performance indicators of expected learning. With the shift from curriculum-based to performance-based measures that require skills and knowledge, this method of evaluating team member performance provides reliable data to indicate that pre-service teachers perform at levels of competence required to meet NCATE Standards. These evaluation tools will assist instructors to sort out who are and are not meeting national criteria.

Program Description

During the summer of 2001, a rural preparation and training program for special educators was conducted with both a preservice and an in-service focus. A university-based Summer school was provided for community children with various academic and social-emotional disabilities who were referred by their parents and teachers. The Summer school experience provided clinical opportunities for three university special education courses, Methods, Learning Theories in Special Education, and Assessment. All three of these courses carry a practicum component. To fulfill the practica, Methods students planned and implemented instructional activities for small groups. Learning Theory students conducted functional analysis, planned and implemented behavior change programs for individual children, and evaluated the effectiveness of the behavior change. Assessment students conducted formal and informal assessment of the academic needs of individual children.

One student from each of these courses served on a collaborative-consultative planning team. Each child had a planning team. Each student had an expected roll to perform on the team in relation to the child. Teams met once per week over a five-week period. Results were brought to team and interpreted in team. Problem solving was based on the on-going team assessment. These teams were designed to simulate actual in-school teacher assistance teams, which were unavailable during summer months.

Method

The instruments designed served two functions. One was a checklist to provide formative assessment of team process. The other two were summative evaluations of team member performance: the reflective self-evaluation tool, and the instructor rating of individual performance.

Team Behavior Observation Checklist was the formative instrument used by the instructors to document team progress across the five team meetings. The form contained a frequency chart and a checklist. The frequency chart documented each member's demonstration of active listening, contributing, disagree agreeably, questioning, and encourage others to participate. These frequencies were totaled for individual team members and across behavioral factors. Along with the frequency chart was a checklist of the five stages of team planning. Team planning stages are establishing a team, problem identification, generating interventions, intervention implementation planning, and evaluation of the intervention. The observing instructor circled each of the stages that was demonstrated by the team during each observed team meeting.

Team Self-evaluation was a summative instrument used by students to reflect on effective team participation and whole team function. This form consisted of six questions. Items 1-5 were answered by individual team members, the team then discussed one or more of the questions in detail and responses to item 6 summarized team discussion of items 1-5.

Individual Summary Evaluation of Team Work was a summative evaluation of individuals' performance by the instructor. This five-point, Likert-type scale addressed how individual members contributed to the teaming process and the effectiveness of the team effort using the characteristics of prepared contributions, interpersonal skills, team planning, team decision-making, and team evaluation of effectiveness. At the end of the course, the instructor evaluated each student once using this summative tool.

Research Questions

To demonstrate a model of collaborative pre-teacher teaming experience and describe its evaluation process the following questions were explored:

1. Did the team's behavior progress through the stages of consultation: establishing the team, identifying the problem, generating interventions, implementing interventions, and evaluating the effectiveness of interventions implemented?
2. Was there evidence of preparation, participation, and process improvement in the Individual Summary evaluation of team members?
3. Were the team members able to reflect on and make at least one recommendation for the improvement of team process?
4. What were the validating commonalities among instruments: Team Behavior Observation Checklist, Team Self Evaluation, and Individual Summary Evaluation of Team Work?

Analysis

Multiple case sampling increases validity, and cases may be chosen on the basis of conceptual grounds (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each evaluation instrument presents a case for comparison, and instructor-posed questions serve to bound the cases in terms of what would or would not be examined.

Question 1: The Team Behavior Observation Checklist was used in order to determine the team's progress through the stages of consultation. The instructor assigned to observe each particular team recorded incidents of

demonstrated team behaviors related to stages at a given meeting. There were 45 instructor observations made over the five-week period. The data was analyzed by a frequency count of demonstrations of each stage of team planning.

Question 2: The Individual Summary Evaluation of Team Work was used to determine the individual members' degree of preparedness, participation and reflection on the team's process. The instructor rated each student at the end of the practica experience. A histogram was constructed of the group's ratings for both overall performance and by each characteristic.

Question 3: The Team Self-evaluation was qualitatively reviewed to determine whether Learning Theory and Assessment students offered at least one suggestion for improving team process in retrospect.

Question 4: Qualitative comparison was conducted to determine if there were some validating commonalities among these three instruments: Team Behavior Observation Checklist, Team Self-evaluation, and Individual Summary Evaluation of Team Work?

Results

Checklist of stages of team planning frequency count indicated teams progressed through the five stages of consultation. The first week all teams demonstrated stage one establishing the team. During the second week, all teams demonstrated problem identification and generating interventions. During week three several teams demonstrated planning implementation of interventions. During week four, stages 2, 3, and 4 were demonstrated by most of the teams. During week five, all but one team demonstrated evaluation of the intervention. Therefore it was concluded that all teams demonstrated progress through the five-stage consultation process.

Individual Summary Evaluation of Team Work ratings revealed that the range of performance was 19 to 25 on the 25-point scale with one outlier earning a rating of 13. This student missed two of the five team meetings, thus she lacked the opportunity to demonstrate the expected skills. This indicates that most team members performed at or above the 80% level. For each characteristic identified, most students received a rating of 4 or 5 which is high on the 5 point Likert-type scale: Prepared Contributions 20/22 students, Interpersonal communications 18/22 students, Planning 21/22, Collaborative decision making 20/22, Evaluation of effectiveness 14/22 with 6 receiving rating a of 3. In conclusion, students came prepared, participated in the team and reflected on the process.

All students made at least one suggestion for team improvement on the Team Self-evaluation form. The one process improvement suggestion that most team members agreed upon was that more time in team would have made problem-solving flow more smoothly. Most opted for more or longer team meetings. The second theme included suggestions for improved communication, such as having team minutes taken, increasing casual conversation away from meeting times, and establishing clearly agreed upon objectives.

Across the three instruments, preparedness and participation were high. Time for teaming and effective communication of children's assessment results and behavior analyses presented difficulty. All but one student left with a good grasp of team process. For pre-service teachers, the whole experience was an "eye opener" regarding academic skills deficits and behavioral issues. Many were surprised to discover how strategies that were implemented really worked in a short period of time, and to discover how many behaviors and skills could be taught in such a short time. Another area of difficulty expressed was establishing goals. Several students expressed that the teams were hesitant to move in a certain direction. One instructor actually had to prompt the team she was observing to move from problem identification and description to planning the intervention. Overall, the students realized that it takes more than one person to effectively manage an instructional environment.

Implications for Rural Practice

In this simulated team experience, students demonstrated evidence of moving through the stages of consultative team process. It would follow that, even in a quasi-official environment, simulations are worthwhile practice to develop teaming and collaboration skills. Therefore, rural teacher preparation programs do not have to be limited by lack of local resources or rely on resources from a distance. They can create valid experiences in simulated team situations focused on problem solving for children.

Implications for Further Research

Several questions that would further verify commonality and validity among instruments remain in process of analysis in relation to this study. One question that the authors are considering at present is, "To what degree did Assessment and Learning Theory students agree in their responses to the Team Self-evaluation items 1 through 5?" These items dealt with effectiveness, efficacy, and efficiency of teaming. Another question to be explored might be, "To what extent did the team self-evaluation ratings agree with instructor ratings of similar items on the Individual Summary Evaluations?"

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AN EVALUATION OF A DECADE OF A RURAL FIELD-BASED SPECIAL AND ELEMENTARY TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM

A ten-year evaluation of the Rural Special Education Program and the Reaching American Indian Elementary and Special Educators Program will be outlined. These two field-based programs have resulted in the retention and preparation of numerous Native American and non-Native special educators in rural and multicultural settings.

A poll by the National Education Association indicated that schools needed more special education teachers than any other group of educators (National Education Association, 1992). This shortage has also been identified by numerous other individuals, groups, and organizations, including the Office of Special Education Programs (1997), United States Department of Education (1998), and the American Association for Employment in Education (1999). Even more pressing is the need for professionals in special education to serve culturally and linguistically different students (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). The National Center for Educational Statistics estimates that there are over 9 million school age students in the U.S. whose primary language is not English. "Recruitment and personnel preparation that includes teaching to standards, professional development, and retention are major concerns that must be addressed if we are to meet the challenges and expectation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997" (NASDSE, 2001).

To address this need, in 1992 the Center for Excellence in Education (CEE) at Northern Arizona University (NAU) in collaboration with the United States Department of Education and the Kayenta Unified School District (KUSD) implemented a special education field-based program in Kayenta, Arizona, located on the Navajo Nation. The program was originally called the Rural Special Education Program (RSEP). The two-semester RSEP program was especially designed to prepare both Native Americans and non-Native Americans to teach in rural and multicultural settings. In 1998 the program was funded for the third three-year cycle and renamed the "Reaching American Indian Elementary and Special Educators Program" (RAISE). The two-cycle, three-semester RAISE program was an expansion of the RSEP as it included the special education *and* the elementary education coursework required for teacher certification. Hereafter, the program will be referred to as the RAISE program, unless the writers are referring to the RSEP specifically. Since 1992, the student makeup of cohorts with the RAISE Program has varied each year. Nonetheless, the majority of the 104 (67 of 104) students who completed the RAISE program are Native American, primarily Navajo participants. Most of the RAISE participants were paraeducators who worked in inclusion classrooms in the KUSD schools. Nearly all of the Navajo students attended school in Kayenta and had been employed by KUSD for many years. Kayenta paraeducator participants were usually thirty to forty-year-old Navajo females who are married with two or more children. Given the responsibilities these students have in their community, many Navajo students found that the only way to obtain a degree was to participate in the RAISE program. On the other hand, the Flagstaff campus-based students moved to Kayenta for 18-months to participate in the RAISE program. Typically students recruited from the main campus were non-Native females in their early twenties who were following the traditional path towards an undergraduate degree and teacher certification. These students chose to participate in the RAISE program because of their strong commitment to multicultural special education.

The first six years of the RSEP program did not include elementary education coursework and the student teaching that is required for graduation from the CEE teacher education program. Consequently, some participants of the RSEP were unable to complete the elementary education requirements due to the lack of financial assistance, distance from campus, or other constraints. Because of these constraints, the RAISE grant proposal was written to include the elementary education coursework. Therefore, most students who had not completed their elementary education requirements in the first two cycles of the grant had the option of completing their elementary education courses in the third cycle of the grant program.

Over the past decade of the grant 109 students were admitted into the program and five students did not complete the program. Two non-Native Students and three Native American students did not complete the program after being admitted. One of the three Native American students left the program for personal reasons and later returned to campus to finish her degree. The other four students (two non-Native American and two Native American) were asked to leave the program due to inconsistencies in their behaviors and the program goals. Of the 109 students 67 students were Native American, primarily Navajo and 37 students were non-Native students. The high program retention rate was attributed to the field-based nature of this program. The Native American students were predominantly paraeducators for the KUSD and therefore able to remain employed and maintain their residence in their home communities. Classes were offered in the evenings and KUSD administrators were supportive of the paraeducators in the program. They allowed the paraeducators to be released from duties for professional development and other relevant program activities. This administrative support was a critical variable to the success of this program. Culturally and linguistically relevant curriculum was integrated in all coursework. The paraeducators had opportunities to transfer what they learned from their courses to the classrooms in which they were assigned. Mentor teachers were available to the program participants and made a difference in the adjustment of the non-Native participants into the community. In addition, the project manager resided in the Kayenta community and was able to provide on-going support to all student participants. Table 1 highlights the retention status of program participants.

Table 1. Retention Status of Program Participants

TOTAL # of Students **ADMITTED** into the RSEP & RAISE Program	Native American Students	Non-Native American Students	TOTAL # of Students **COMPLETING** the RSEP & RAISE Program
109	67	37	104

The graduate status of program participants reflected in Table 2 was unusually high for both Native Americans and non-Native Americans. However, some of the participants decided they would rather remain in the position of paraeducator with KUSD than becoming fully certified teachers. Financial and location constraints may have remained an obstacle to some of the former participants due to the student teacher semester that was not included in the RAISE program. Tuition is high and the students often have to give up their paid positions at KUSD in order to complete their student teaching.

Table 2. Graduation Status of Program Participants

Total # Students Graduated	Native American Students	Non-Native American
78*	44	34

*Number includes eight participants student teaching in spring 2002.

However, an unusually high number (27) of former program participants had gone on to pursue their master's degree in education at NAU. As shown in Table 3, fifteen of these participants were successful in their pursuit and completed the requirements for the advanced degree. These former participants are providing needed services to our culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional students throughout the State. One former participant is currently the Director of Special Education for a Navajo Nation school. Another former participant is the only

Navajo in the state of Arizona who possesses a Master's degree in Deaf and Blind and is currently employed by the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind. And still another Native American student is currently in a doctoral program. Several other Native American students have inquired about doctoral programs and are at various stages of the application process. These numbers reflect NAU graduate coursework. There may be other former participants who are pursuing a master's degree at other institutions. Due to the increase in web-based and Instructional Interactive Television (IITV) courses, graduate work has become more accessible to the Native American students residing in rural and remote communities. NAU has extended its satellite campuses to every region of the State and students no longer have to rely on travel and traditional deliveries of instruction to complete their coursework.

Table 3. Status of Program Participants' Master's of Education

M.Ed. Completed	M.Ed. In Progress	M.Ed. Total
15	12	27

Table 4 highlights the benefits to KUSD discussed earlier. Twenty-six former participants are primarily Navajo and currently hold certified teaching positions in the school district. Nine of the former participants are providing direct services to children within the KUSD as counselors and paraeducators. KUSD assisted in the student teaching placement of the program's last cohort of eight students. When these eight student teachers complete their student teaching assignment, at least seven will be hired by the district to teach in the fall of 2002.

Table 4. Former Participants at Kayenta Unified School District.

Certified Teaching Positions	Providing Direct Services to Children (i.e., Counselors, Aides)	Student Teaching
26	9	8

Conclusion

This award-winning program (e.g., Arizona Teacher Education Award, ACRES Exemplary Program Award for Cross Cultural Services, NAU Outstanding Service to the Profession Award) could possibly be used as a model to address the needs in other rural and multicultural settings. A true collaborative partnership between NAU, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, and the KUSD had been crucial to the success of the RAISE program. The KUSD provided teacher apartments for the RAISE project manager and students recruited from the main campus. It also provided space for the RAISE classroom for the university courses. In addition, KUSD provided sites for the practicum coursework and some student teaching placements. KUSD teachers and administrators were hired as instructors and guest speakers for some RAISE courses and were involved in the interview and the selection of potential RAISE participants. NAU contributed tuition waivers for all coursework for the program. NAU also provided the necessary administrative support. The RAISE partnership had been mutually beneficial to NAU and the KUSD. Non-Native students learned powerful professional and personal lessons from the program. Students completed the program at a high rate, graduated from the CEE Teacher Education Program at high rates, and most Navajo students remained in the area and secured teaching positions with the KUSD. The RAISE program could not have been developed without the continuous federal funding from the U.S. Department of Education -- Office of Special Education & Rehabilitation Services.

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GET ON BOARD! ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION AS A MEANS TO COMBAT TEACHER SHORTAGES

Teacher shortages in critical certification fields such as special education have resulted in considerable discussion, and sometimes controversy, between public education (K-12) and teacher preparation programs. Most rural states have been no stranger to these discussions. A review of the West Virginia Department of Education annual data reports reveals that almost twenty percent of educators assigned to special education positions serve on some form of emergency license. This, of course, is complicated by the looming prospect of a national teacher shortage. Despite efforts of both public (K-12) education and teacher education programs, the percentages of personnel on emergency licenses have not declined significantly over the past twenty years.

An examination of the nature of these chronic special education teacher shortages revealed a number of interesting factors contributing to this problem. One such finding was that there was no shortage of fully licensed personnel to serve some of the exceptionalities. For example, there are actually more fully licensed personnel to serve students with learning disabilities and mental retardation than there are teaching positions requiring this licensure. The illusion of shortage has been created by state code and regulation which allow already certified general educators to use emergency special education licensure as an entry-level route to secure initial employment. As the teacher moves toward obtaining full licensure in special education, they also accrue seniority within the school district. Then, when a general education position opens, the newly licensed special educator may employ their senior status to move out of special education, leaving yet another teacher assignment to be filled on an emergency licensure basis. The recognition of this "revolving door" problem served as a motivation to develop an alternative track for certifying, at the graduate level, persons whose formal education resulted in a degree(s) in fields other than education. Before describing one such program, it is important to set the historical context within which development of alternative certification programs has occurred.

Overview-Alternative Teacher Certification

Some years ago, Koff, Floris and Crouin (1976) described traditional teacher certification as a process developed to assure that those who enter the teaching profession meet some set of minimum competency standards. Each state has the latitude to set these standards and a document developed by the National Association of Directors of Teacher Education and Certification annually describes these requirements. Typically, traditional certification programs included specific credit hour requirements to be earned from higher education institutions in the content (subject) area, professional studies (e.g. methodology) and in practica (student or practice teaching). Colleges and universities typically verify that the candidate has met minimum credit hour standards at which time many state education agencies also require successful completion of competency tests prior to the issuance of the certificate.

Alternative teacher certification, within the context of this paper, may be described as a departure from the more traditional undergraduate route through teacher education programs. In addition, the program to be described differed from traditional certification by establishing a different target population and length of training rather than in program content, vigor or expected outcomes. This was consistent with the early position advocated by Smith et al. (1985). Further, the features of alternative programs recommended by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education were adopted and included rigorous admissions standards, curriculum appropriate to the beginning teacher, a supervised internship and competency examinations in both the subject field and professional studies.

The alternative program described in this paper is one of a series of programs offered among the states for the purpose of attracting quality adults, who already have at least a bachelor's degree, into the teaching profession. As of September 2000, twenty-nine states had alternative certification programs that were recognized in the most recent National Center for Education Information report (2001) on alternative teacher certification.

Program Description

The goal of the alternative special education program is to provide educational opportunities for students at the post-bachelor's and master's degree level to become teachers of exceptional children in one of three categories: mental retardation, specific learning disabilities, or behavior disorders. These individuals may come into the program from non-education fields.

Program experiences in special education involve examining traditional and contemporary practices, using the terminology of the field, and identifying the characteristics of each group of exceptional children relative to historical, environmental, educational, cultural, legal and political conditions. The utilization of standardized and criterion referenced diagnostic tests in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral areas is also a part of program experiences.

Developing cognitive and affective diagnostic hypotheses for each child and generating and translating those data into educational programming are stressed in the program. Selecting and developing materials, determining appropriate approaches to instruction, and developing and using behavioral objectives are of principal importance. Additionally, planning and developing a total teaching environment that promotes effective learning through flexible scheduling in a variety of administrative arrangements are required experiences in the alternative special education program.

Admission Requirements

To be considered for admission as a degree or professional development student, applicants must submit the following information to the MUGC Office of Admissions and Records:

- A completed "Application for Graduate Admissions" form;
- Official copies of all undergraduate and graduate transcripts (undergraduate GPA of 2.5 required)
- Official scores for the GRE or MAT; applicants must obtain a combined score of 800 (verbal and quantitative) on the GRE or an MAT score of 30.*

*GRE/MAT score requirement waived for applicants holding a masters degree.

Praxis I Requirement

In addition to meeting the graduate admission requirements of both the University and School of Education, applicants must take and pass the Praxis I (pre-Professional Skills Test) tests in Reading, Writing and Mathematics within the first twelve hours of coursework. The Praxis I requirement may be waived for applicants presenting an enhanced ACT score of 26 or higher, or a re-centered SAT score of 1125 or higher.

Other Certification Requirements

Candidates applying for teacher licensure must also satisfy the GPA and testing requirements established by the West Virginia Department of Education. Currently, candidates must have a minimum overall GPA of 2.5 as well as a 2.5 GPA in the content specialization area. Current WVDE testing requirements include the Praxis II content tests and the Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) test (K-6).

The candidate must complete all coursework and appropriate licensure tests prior to being recommended for licensure by the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE).

Program of Study

The Alternative Certification Program requires students to complete 30 semester hours for the initial licensure: a 12 hour Professional Education Core; a nine hour Special Education core; plus the 9 semester hour standard Special Education Certification Block in each licensure area. A supervised graduate practicum is included in each area. Students who qualify and opt to complete the Master of Arts in Special Education degree may do so with the addition of 12 semester hours of required Foundations of Education and advanced Special Education coursework (see Graduate Catalog, pp 85-86 or at http://www.marshall.edu/www/gradcat) for a degree program totaling 42 semester hours.

Plan of Study

1.	Professional Education Core (Required)		12 hrs.
	EDF 619, Educ. Psychology	3 hrs	
	EDF 665, Socio. of Amer. Schools	3 hrs	
	CISP 510, Intro. to Inst. Practices	3 hrs	
	CIRG 636, Modern Dev. Reading	3 hrs	
2.	Special Education Core (Required)		9 hrs.
	CISP 520, Intro. to Sp. Ed.	3 hrs	
	CISP 535, Gen. Sp. Ed. Prog.	3 hrs	
	CISP 626, Diag.-Clin. Pract.	3 hrs	
3.	Certification Area		9 hrs.
	(Select one or more areas)		
	Behavior Disorders		
	CISP 524, Introd. to BD	3 hrs	
	CISP 645, Educ. of BD	3 hrs	
	CISP 649, Practicum/BD	3 hrs	
	or		
	Mentally Impaired		
	CISP 533, Introd. to MI	3 hrs	
	CISP 553, Educ. of MI	3 hrs	
	CISP 651, Practicum/MI	3 hrs	
	or		
	Specific Learning Disabilities		
	CISP 523, Introd. to LD	3 hrs	
	CISP 647, Educ. of LD	3 hrs	
	CISP 646, Practicum/LD	3 hrs	

Course Delivery

Delivery of coursework is always a challenge for an institution which has a "campus with walls" orientation. In order to avoid becoming "campus-bound", a variety of techniques have been utilized to serve rural students. Traditionally, the institution has relied heavily on a cadre of carefully selected adjunct faculty who join full-time faculty in traveling to one of the seven "distant" sites. In addition, both audio-only and video-teleconferencing (with audio bridge) as well as WebCT are utilized to link distant sites with professors. To date, identification of cohort groups formed to participate in the preliminary block of coursework include four regional sites across the state. Finally, a variety of alternative class meeting schedules have been developed to fit the nature of some coursework or a particular group of students.

Discussion

"States report that more than 53,000 people have been licensed through alternative certification programs since 1985" (National Center for Education Information, 2001). It is the belief of this writer that those students who have completed this alternative certification track meet the most important performance criterion of being "safe to practice", a standard proposed by Williamson et al. in 1985. Currently, efforts are being made to examine retention rates via a follow-up study. If the turnover rate for these special educators is significantly diminished as expected, one more puzzle piece may be added in the effort to serve special needs students in rural settings.

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A LOOK AT VARIABLES AFFECTING PARENT SATISFACTION WITH IEP MEETINGS

Attending an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting can present opportunities for participation in productive decision-making, and barriers that may impede that very same decision-making process (Harry, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c). For this reason, educators need strategies that create parent-friendly environments for good decision-making within IEP meetings. The U.S. Supreme Court decisions in Brown v. Topeka, Kansas, Board of Education (1954), Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (1971), and Mills v. District of Columbia (1972) served as catalysts for further legislation affirming rights to education for children with special educational needs (Hardman, Drew, Egan, & Wolf, 1990).

Parental satisfaction with education for children with special needs has been a topic of inquiry since before Public Law 94-142 in 1975 (Smith & Luckasson, 1995). IDEA of 1997, Pubic Law 105-17, mandates public education to actively involve parent participation in IEP decision-making meetings (Act to Amend the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, to reauthorize and make Improvements to the Act, and for other purposes (IDEA of 1997)).

Prior research focusing on parent satisfaction with the decision-making processes in IEP meetings identified a variety of concerns. Parents want to be provided information on what their children are expected to learn (Dembinski & Mauser (1977). Parents hold certain expectations for the outcome of IEP meetings and for participation opportunities (Harry, Allen, & McLaughlin, 1995). Parent understanding of the importance of activities in IEP meetings can be influenced by perceived effectiveness of the process (Rutherford & Billig, 1995). Empowerment of parents provides a positive connection in the decision-making processes (Turner, 1996). However, no single study has investigated the relationship of multiple variables as they relate to parent satisfaction with IEP meetings.

Seven questions were developed to investigate potential relationships between the four variables and parent satisfaction.

1. How does professional etiquette relate to parent satisfaction?
2. Which factors of professional etiquette are most related to parent satisfaction?
3. How do procedurals relate to parent satisfaction?
4. Which factors of procedurals are most related to parent satisfaction?
5. How do parent and student demographic characteristics relate to parent satisfaction?
6. How do child eligibility codes relate to parent satisfaction?
7. Are there interactions among professional etiquette, procedurals, demographic factors, or child eligibility code factors in their relationship to parent satisfaction?

Methods

A cluster, convenience-sampling procedure was implemented to identify participants (Vierra & Pollock, 1988). This sampling model was selected because participation was restricted to parents of students who have been evaluated for special education services and who have gone to an IEP meeting.

Participants

The original participants were to be from 20 schools of an urban southwestern, multicultural border school district participated. As the study progressed, sampling was expanded to include a larger population in the contiguous southwest region. The expanded sampling included persons from advocacy groups and eligible parents enrolled in special education courses at New Mexico State University. The expanded sample resulted in 71 more returned surveys toward the final 207 total returned usable surveys.

Instrumentation and Procedures

Design

Two research design formats were used to answer the seven research questions. The first format was a descriptive research design using single group. The second format used voluntary interviews from which were developed grounded theory (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Quantitative Component

The quantitative component used a one-group non-treatment type survey measure (Borg et al., 1993; Vierra, & Pollock, 1988). Responses were analyzed as descriptive research (Borg et al., 1993).

A structured survey was developed to gather quantitative information (Dillman, 1978; Borg, Gall, & Gall, 1993). Survey items required dichotomous responses, classification responses, and Likert-type responses. A separate detached form provided space for comments and opportunity to volunteer to be personally interviewed.

The survey was developed and written in two languages. This provided comparability between the responses of English and Spanish language preference respondents. Cultural aspects and idiomatic phrases were considered in developing both survey forms. Words and terms do not always translate accurately from one language to another (Harry, 1992b). Certain social graces required in one culture might not hold the equal degree of importance in another (Lian & Aloia, 1994). For those reasons, verbatim translation of the English survey was challenging and ultimately, not appropriate in a few instances.

A representative non-literate group of both English and Spanish speaking parents were sought as volunteers for oral administration of the survey. A script was given to campus designated persons for distributing surveys.

Qualitative Component

The qualitative component, interviewing (Rubin & Babbie, 1997), used semistructured interviews. These interviews were conducted as extensions of the written survey (Bogdan, & Biklen, 1992). An interpreter assisted the researcher during interviews with respondents who spoke only Spanish. The survey response number was 207 with 24 interviews conducted. This was an 11.6% interview rate to the response number.

Description of Variables

Each of the four independent variables were investigated in prior research only singularly or with a secondary emphasis on their relationships (Harry, 1992a, 1992b; Tafoya, 1999). Prior studies investigated educator and parent relationships of variables, without regard to interaction between them or to parent satisfaction with IEP meetings.

The four independent variables provided distinct groups of information based on perceptions of the respondents. The first variable, etiquette, encompassed communication activities and provision for physical comfort of parents in meeting settings (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Council for Exceptional Children, 1991; Goldstein, Strickland, Turnbull, & Curry, 1980; Harry, 1992b, 1992c; Turnbull & Ruef, 1997). The second variable, procedurals, was a set of items associated with documenting behaviors and those parental legal rights identified by IDEA. The third set of variables, demographics, were identified by respondents (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Harry, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c; Trivette, Dunst, Boyd, & Hamby, 1995). The fourth variable, student eligibility codes, was a set of 11 mandated special education disabilities or "student eligibility codes" (IDEA of 1997, 20 U.S.C. 1400 et al., §602(3)(A)), of two combined impairment conditions (Deaf-Blind and Multiple Disabilities), and of two additional coding responses, "Don't know" and "Not eligible".

The dependent variable is parent satisfaction. Satisfaction is important in providing an atmosphere conducive to decision-making for children with special needs (Baca & Cervantes, 1989; Baumgartner, Bryan, Donahue, & Nelson, 1993; Bellew Family personal internet communication February 26, 1997; Björck-Åkesson &

Granlund, 1995; Coleman, 1991; Cooper & Rascon, 1994: Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Harry, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c; Lian & Aloia, 1994).

Results

Data Analysis

Data analysis of the five sets of variables quantified each survey item response. The first dependent variable, parent satisfaction, is composed of six separate items with scores potentially ranging from 0 to 11. The rest of the variables were independent variables. Professional etiquette had 12 items with scores ranging from 0 to 12. Procedurals had 33 items with scores ranging from 0 to 33. Parent and child demographics had ten items, which identified mutually exclusive classifications. Student eligibility codes identified students as having one or more eligibility for special education service.

Tools used in data analysis were regression, t-test, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) of responses to the survey and thematic analysis of interviews. Descriptions of the variables, statistical tools, and statistical significance, components of the quantitative methodology, are presented in Table 1. Components of qualitative methodology are presented in Tables 2 and 3, which identify the ranked themes and their associated mean satisfaction scores. satisfaction scores range from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning Very Dissatisfied and 5 being Very Satisfied.

Results of thematic analysis of interviews identified positive relationships with satisfaction. Respondents identified the presence of communication in meetings most frequently. IEP implementation was the second most frequently reported theme of concern identified in interviews. Respect for parents was the third most frequently reported theme of concern identified in interviews. The fourth most frequently reported theme was parent involvement. The fifth most frequently reported theme was comfort. The final most frequently reported theme was staff presence. Results of thematic analysis identified respondents were mostly satisfied with IEP meetings.

Answers to Research Questions

Answers to the seven research questions are revealed by analysis of written reports by 207 individuals and oral interview reports on 26 IEP meetings. Analyses indicate participants are generally satisfied with the meetings. Quantitative data identifies 5% of the outliers in the "Dissatisfying" group. Qualitative analysis identifies 12% of the respondents rate IEP meetings as Dissatisfying. Interpretation of significance of these results must consider the small number involved in both methodological procedures.

Analyses of descriptive statistics and grounded theory identify: (a) participants whose children have Physical/Health Impairments are generally least satisfied, (b) a strong relationship appears between communication and satisfaction, and (c) absence of proper personnel leads to dissatisfaction with IEP meetings.

Results of statistical analyses reveal two sets of variables as they relate to satisfaction. The first set of variables is singleton variables. The second set of variables involves interaction of variables as they relate to satisfaction.

When viewed as a sole indicator of parent satisfaction with IEP meetings, each variable has impact on satisfaction. Each of the four independent variables influence satisfaction with IEP meetings. Direct positive relationships exist when professional etiquette and procedurals are examined as sole indicators of satisfaction. Three features of Parent and Child Demographics demonstrate inverse relationships to satisfaction. Those three demographic features are Family Income, Parent Education, and Male participant attending with spouse/partner. Of the fourth variable, student eligibility codes, less satisfaction is reported for meetings held for children with Physical/Health Impairments.

When viewed as part of an interaction, all four independent variables reveal types of significance. Either in first level or second level interactions, Demographic features, Annual Family Income and Parent Education, show interaction with etiquette and procedurals. Ethnicity, when viewed for interaction, demonstrates no significance in change of satisfaction scores. The Eligibility Code variable of Physical/Health Impairments continues to reveal significance when combined in interaction with the other independent variables. Possible reasons for lesser

satisfaction by parents of students with Physical/Health Impairments may be due to differences in perceived needs of the child held by parents and school staff. These needs may focus more on health/medical services (i.e. chemical intervention; intubation; feeding a student through a gastrointestinal tube; cleaning of a stoma; physical therapy for ambulation, bathroom transfers, or upper body strengthening) than standard academic practices (i.e. reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, science, physical education, arts). Although it is understood that services to students with eligibility for special education must be educationally relevant, such judgments are often interpreted differently by members of IEP Teams.

Recommendations

There must be training for professionals and parents to follow through with agreements made in the IEP meeting and on the IEP plan. The IEP is a legal document, which parents report that some professional personnel do not respond to as being legally binding.

Professionals must offer explanations to parents who are not comfortable with "educationalese," offering information in terminology appropriate to demystify activities of IEP meetings.

Currently, child advocacy organizations and educational institutions present training and information on special education and the IEP meeting. This is available locally and through the internet. Efforts must continue to train professionals and parents concerning special education and the IEP meeting.

Administrators must secure follow-through of IEP plan in the areas of modifications, services, and equipment.

Administrators must provide and display competent administrative participation in IEP meetings.

For every IEP meeting, Administrators must require three conditions are present for all IEP meetings. The first, appropriate personnel are present. The second condition, teachers' classes are covered so that they may attend IEP meetings to participate in salient decision-making to take place. The third, the environment, both physical and emotional, must be reasonably comfortable and conducive to decision-making. Specific training on the importance of the above-identified areas is advocated.

Future research may examine relationships between satisfaction and prior experience with IEP meetings. Parents who have had prior experience with IEP meetings may have different satisfaction levels than those who have attended meetings in the past.

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Table 1
Variables, Statistical Tools, and Relationships with Parent Satisfaction

Hypothesis	Variables	Tool	Significance
1	Professional Etiquette	Regression	Positive relationship with satisfaction
2	Procedurals	Regression	Positive relationship with satisfaction
3	Comparison of female to male participants	t-test	No evidence that these populations are from different populations.
4	Comparison of females attending with their spouse to those attending singularly	t-test	No significant difference in satisfaction.
5	Comparison of males attending with their spouse to those attending singularly	t-test	Difference in satisfaction detected for males without spouses present. They were more satisfied.
6	Comparison of parents of male students to parents of female students.	t-test	No significant difference in satisfaction
7	Comparison of ethnic groups.	t-test	No significant difference in satisfaction.
8	Comparison of language preference groups	ANOVA	No significant difference in satisfaction
9	Comparison of grade levels	ANOVA	No significant difference in satisfaction.
10	Family Income	ANOVA	Negative relationship between Family Income and satisfaction.
11	Parent Education	ANOVA	No relationship between Parent Education and satisfaction.
12	Student Eligibility Codes	ANOVA	Relationship between student eligibility codes and satisfaction.
13	Interaction between professional etiquette and Parent and Student Demographic	ANOVA	Interaction
14	Interaction between professional etiquette and Family Income	ANOVA	Interaction
15	Interaction between professional etiquette and Parent Ethnicity	Regression	No interaction
16	Interaction between professional etiquette and Parent Gender	Regression	No interaction
17	Interaction between professional etiquette and Spouse/Partner Present	Regression	No interaction
18	Interaction between professional etiquette and Parent Education	Regression	Interaction
19	Interaction between professional etiquette and student eligibility codes	Regression	Interaction
20	Interaction between (a) procedurals and Parent and Student Demographic	ANOVA	Interaction
21	Interaction between procedurals and Family Income	Regression	Interaction
22	Interaction between procedurals and Parent Ethnicity	Regression	No interaction

Table 1 (Continued)

23	Interaction between procedurals and Parent Gender	Regression	No interaction
24	Interaction between (a) procedurals and (b) Spouse/Partner Present	Regression	No interaction
25	Interaction between procedurals and Parent Education	Regression	Interaction
26	Interaction between procedurals and student eligibility codes	Regression	Interaction
27	Interaction between Professional Etiquette, Family Income, and (c) Parent Ethnicity	Regression	Interaction
28	Interaction between procedurals, Family Income, and Parent Ethnicity	Regression	Interaction
29	Interaction between professional Etiquette, Parent Education, and student eligibility codes	Regression	Interaction
30	Interaction between procedurals, Parent Education, and student eligibility codes	Regression	Interaction

Table 2
Ranking by Frequency of Coded Themes, Etiquette, and Procedurals for Relationships of Reported Meetings

Number of Rank	Frequency	Theme	Meetings Present	Meetings Lacking
1.	23	Communication (E/P)	16	7
2.	13	IEP Implementation (P)	5	8
3.	12	Respect for Parent (E)	8	4
4.	10	Parent Involvement (P)	5	4
5.	7	Comfort (E)	3	4
6.	6	Staff Presence (P)	3	3

Note: E= Professional Etiquette component. P = Procedurals component.

Table 3
Mean Satisfaction Score Response Rate for Coded Themes

Theme	Present in Meeting Mean	Lacking in Meeting Mean
Communication (E/P)	4.6	2.9
IEP Implementation (P)	4.2	3.4
Respect for Parent (E)	4.5	2.5
Parent Involvement (P)	4.4	2.0
Staff Presence (P)	5.0	1.5
Comfort (E)	5.0	2.7

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PREPARING THE BEST TEACHERS FOR OUR CHILDREN

The decision to admit a student to a teacher preparation program is an important one: important to that individual's future and crucial to the children the individual would encounter in his/her career in teaching. Equally important are the decisions we make as professionals to dismiss a student from our program. As we move into an ever more litigious society, teacher educators must be aware of our rights and responsibilities regarding admissions and dismissal decisions. More and more of us are being faced with the threat of lawsuits from students to whom we have denied admission or have dismissed from our programs. We know that being successful in teaching involves more than achieving an adequate grade point average, that there are professional and interpersonal skills necessary for success in teaching, but we often have difficulty articulating just what those skills are. As we think about defending ourselves in court, we must be able to show clearly that we can identify what those skills are, that we can assess them adequately, and can judge when a student is deficient and shows too little aptitude for success in teaching.

A review of the relevant literature

The issues related to appropriate admissions procedures have been studied for many years (Haberman, 1972; Watts, 1980). Many research studies have been done to identify which admissions criteria are the best predictors of success in teacher education programs, whether the use of standardized test scores were effective indicators of potential in teaching, and what the impact of these criteria were on the admissions of minority candidates (Ashburn & Fisher, 1984; Fisher & Feldmann, 1985; George et al., 1990; Olstad, 1988; Peterson & Speaker, 1996; Riggs et al., 1992; Sandefur, 1986; Sinclair & Picogna, 1974). Other authors have shared the procedures they currently use for admissions (Cooper and others, 1988; Coyner, 1993; Eckart, 1988; Jordan, 1984; Malvern, 1991; McKenna, 1993). A limited number of articles have been published in the teacher education literature about admissions strategies used in other professions (Brodsky, 1991; Fassett & Olswang, 1991; Mueller & Orimoto, 1995).

Even with the access to this literature, what teacher educators bemoan is the lack of information about what the judicial system finds to be appropriate and inappropriate admissions and dismissal procedures. Many teacher educators have been faced with the threat of lawsuits from students who were either not admitted or who were dismissed at some point in the teacher preparation program. Many of us have been sued and have had the experience of being told by the judge that our procedures were insufficient in terms of explaining our policies, the definition of professional judgment and how the role plays in a decision to dismiss a student. This insufficiency resulted in the upholding of the student's case and the university was forced to readmit the student or even pay damages to the student. However, we find that in many cases, the same situation is not true in other professions. There have been suits filed against schools of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and nursing which dismissed students (often for lack of development of appropriate "professional skills") and the courts upheld the decision to dismiss. Teacher educators can learn from these experiences by studying the relevant court cases (a complete listing of the cases used in this paper can be found in Appendix A) and identifying ways these other professionals have found to protect themselves and justify the professional judgments they have exercised.

Lessons learned from others' experiences

Decisions to deny admission or to dismiss a student from a professional program are never easy. The issue of faculty members' reluctance to make these kinds of decisions exists in every professional program. There may be particular concern on the part of our tenure-track and clinical faculty (e.g. student teaching supervisors) because of their perception about the extent to which the institution will back them. However, the courts have treated decisions made by faculty in all categories equally and have supported academicians' decisions as long as students' rights were observed and the decisions were made fairly. In *Connelly v. University of Vermont* (1965), the federal district court ruled that it is within the purview of academic freedom for faculty to make decisions about students' progress. Faculty and administrators were described as being uniquely qualified to make these judgments.

When faculty use quantifiable assessment strategies it is fairly easy to show how a student is progressing. It is less clear, and so less comfortable for many faculty, to discuss a student's performance when more subjective assessment methods are used. In teacher education, as in other professional programs which include clinical experiences, it is necessary and appropriate for faculty to make subjective judgments about a student's progress. Fassett and Olswang (1991) found that "recent court decisions have upheld faculty professional judgments when minimal due process was provided" (p. 211). They went on to point out that "when students' rights are observed, and a fair evaluation of the student's progress indicates a basis for dismissal, faculty members at all levels can be reasonably confident that they will prevail in a legal challenge" (p. 214).

A review of the logic behind court decisions in cases brought out of disagreement about an admission or dismissal decision shows two major concepts: the right of an institution to make decisions about a student's academic fitness and the need for the institution to follow advertised processes. In *Regents of the University of Michigan v. Ewing* (1985), a student was dismissed from medical school after failing to complete the program in the required time period; this student also earned the lowest score in the history of the program on the exam required by the National Board of Medical Examiners, failing the exam. Ewing claimed that he'd been denied due process, but the U.S. Supreme Court held that the university had developed and followed fair processes and had acted in good faith. Another case which followed logic similar to that used in Ewing was *Clements v. Nassau County* (1987). In that case a nursing program student was dismissed from the program after failing in her clinical work over repeated experiences. The court ruled that the institution had made an appropriate judgment after finding her performance lacking during multiple experiences.

In *Board of Curators of the University of Missouri et al. V. Horowitz* (1978), a student was dropped from medical school on the basis of her poor performance in the clinical aspects of the program. Horowitz challenged her dismissal from the program on the basis that it was depriving her from "liberty" rights (the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution guarantees that the State "shall not deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law") because she felt that the dismissal would prevent her from continuing her education at another institution. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Horowitz had been treated fairly, that she had been fully informed about the faculty's dissatisfaction with her clinical performance, and that the faculty and institution had a right to make that academic decision.

In *Barletta v. Louisiana State University Medical Center* (1988), the student was dismissed from dental school on the basis of three incidents which occurred while the student was working as a part-time dental hygienist in his father's dental office. The court ruled that Barletta had been afforded due process, that he had been given adequate notice of the hearing, that his waivers of right to council and right against self-incrimination were voluntary, that he had waived his right to appeal issues of whether the charges were vague and ambiguous, and that he did not show any irreparable injury. In the case of *Neel v. Indiana University Board of Trustees* (1982), a dental student was dismissed from the program on the basis of a low grade point average (1.6), a poor performance record in his clinical studies, and a high record of absenteeism. The student sued saying the institution had breached the contract with him and demanded reinstatement. The court found for the university on the basis that there was a written policy in the Bulletin stating that three unexcused absences would result in dismissal from the school. In *Wilson v. Illinois Benedictine College* (1983), a student sued because he had been dismissed from an accounting program because he had received two "D" grades in the program. He argued that his advisor had failed to warn him that he could not graduate under those circumstances and that the college acted arbitrarily and capriciously in refusing him graduation. The court found for the institution because the school had clearly stated its policies in the Bulletin.

The courts have ruled in favor of the dismissed students when they have found the institutions did not follow their published processes. In the case of *Abrams v. Illinois College of Podiatric Medicine* (1979), the court found for the plaintiff, a student who had been dismissed from a podiatric medicine program because of poor grades. The court ruled that the institution had not followed its own policies as described in the Student Handbook and had not provided the student periodic information and suggestions for improvement as promised by the Handbook. In *Maitland v. Wayne State University* (1977), a medical school student was dismissed because of a failing grade on the final exam for the second year. An investigation showed the university found it had made several errors and had allowed other students to retake the exam. The court found for the student because the institution had acted arbitrarily and did not treat all students in the same situation in the same manner. In the case of *Olsson v. Board of Higher Education of the City of New York* (1980), a student was dismissed from a graduate program on the basis of

poor performance on the general examination requirements. The student sued saying that his professor had misstated the requirements and so had misled him. The court allowed the student to retake the exam because the professor was acting in his role as authority for the school and had failed to provide accurate information to the student.

Cases from a variety of professional programs have followed the precedents set by the Ewing and Horowitz cases: *Easley v. University of Michigan Board of Regents* (1986) concerned a law school; *Haberle v. University of Alabama in Birmingham* (1986) was brought by a chemistry student; *Hammond v. Auburn University* (1987) was a case against a school of engineering; *Morin v. Cleveland Metropolitan General Hospital School of Nursing* (1986) involved a program in nursing; and *Schuler v. University of Minnesota* (1986) concerned a program in psychology. In each of these cases, the decisions made by faculty, whether on the basis of strict, quantifiable academic data (grade point average, etc.) or on the basis of a more subjective judgment about the student's fitness were upheld by the courts as long as the institution followed its own published processes and could show the decision had been made fairly and that the student's rights had been observed.

Processes we developed in response

As someone whose institution faced four lawsuits several years ago, I found the need to go beyond the teacher education literature to learn how to better protect the institution from suits filed to protest our admissions and dismissal decisions, decisions we know are valid, judgments that need to be made. I studied the court rulings from other professional programs and then initiated the processes described below at my institution.

At Gonzaga University, we began with a model first developed at the University of Redlands and then revamped it to meet our particular needs. We wanted to find a way to screen out program applicants who showed little potential for success in our program and to get to know the skills and needs of our prospective students. We also wanted to introduce the key themes of our program so students would know from the beginning what our program emphasized and what we valued as professionals. In particular, we wanted to introduce the concept of reflective thinking, the idea that teaching is an interpersonal and professional act, the idea of the value of developing conflict resolution skills, and the philosophy we share in our belief in the value of multiple perspectives and ways of doing. We also wanted to introduce students to the importance of the development of their professional skills, including humor, self-knowledge, resiliency factors, collaboration, respect for the field of education, how to think on your feet, and how to collaborate. We based our model on the literature on reflective thinking (Posner's work was our true base), on the literature about adult learners, on the teacher induction literature, and on surveys done by the Washington State Professional Education Advisory Board about the skills needed by beginning teachers.

We decided to structure a Professional Skills Lab as a Saturday morning, four-hour session with a variety of activities. We would begin with a welcome and an introduction from the Associate Dean, introducing the faculty, and explaining the rationale for the Lab. We would then discuss advising, state regulations, and distribute some of the paperwork we're required to file. We wanted to teach a new skill in the Lab to make this a more meaningful learning experience and decided to investigate various instruments we might use during the Lab. We selected the True Colors materials (True Colors Communications Group, 1990) which are based on Jungian theory and are somewhat related to the Meyers-Briggs test. The True Colors materials help individuals (children and/or adults) identify four basic personality types; the materials include suggested classroom activities and videos.

We begin the morning with a review of the history and purpose of the Lab and then present the True Colors theory. We spend approximately 1.5 hours presenting the theory, having students self-analyze, having students work in small groups, and then doing a jigsaw activity back to the full group. Then we show a video we made in which we demonstrate the theory in practice in a simulation of our introductory course. We then divide students into small groups and assign each group a faculty member/facilitator; the groups discuss the theory and how they might apply the information while the facilitator records behavioral observations. We did change this process after the first time through because we found that the facilitators were so skillful that all students participated actively in the groups and we observed no problematic behaviors. We now run the groups in a leaderless format; the students are given three situations they might encounter as teachers and are asked to come to consensus about what they would do if they were in that situation. The faculty member is a silent observer and record-keeper. Students then are called back to the large group and are given a reflective writing exercise.

The products we take away from the Lab are the state-required forms, the faculty observers' notes from the leaderless group discussion, and the reflective writing sample. The Associate Dean then reviews all the materials, meets with students who were identified as potentially problematic, and files the materials in their departmental files.

The advantages we have found from this process are that faculty who teach courses later in the program have a chance to meet the new students, students have a chance to meet the faculty, and students learn a new theory and develop better interpersonal skills. We can identify and counsel out of the program the students who show insufficient potential for teaching at this point. We have a chance to screen the students before they request a site for their first In-School Experience and the students have a chance to bond together with other students who share a common goal. Students have told us in both their reflective writing exercises and comments made orally that the Lab was a really positive experience. They learn about themselves, how to better deal with others, and about the professional skills they will need to develop. The disadvantages are that it means faculty are asked to work on yet another Saturday morning, it's hard to predict how many students will actually attend, we have to follow up on the students who did not attend, and it generates zero credit hours but incurs expenses in faculty time and physical resources.

To date, approximately 750 Gonzaga students have completed the process. Since we initiated this process, not one student has been dropped from the program after being admitted. We are convinced that in the cases of students we have not admitted that our collective judgments were justified. We believe that our teacher preparation program has been strengthened by more careful attention to the admissions process because we are able to use the insights gained during the assessment as diagnostic information to better meet individual student's needs. This process has enabled us to be much more clear with prospective students about the ideas and values embedded in our program, including our commitment to cross-cultural teaching, our belief in the necessity of effective interpersonal skills, and our commitment to diversity. We have also been able to recruit more students from under-represented groups because of our move to this more holistic admissions process.

While we were designing the Professional Skills Lab, we developed a Fair Process Manual to apprise students of their rights and responsibilities and to make them aware of the monitoring processes we would be using to assess their progress in the teacher education program. This document was drafted by the various directors of programs within the School of Education and then was rewritten to correct for style. The document was then sent to our Academic Vice President and to the university's corporate counsel for extensive reviews. We made needed changes and then published the document; it has been revised since our administrative restructuring to reflect current job titles and processes. The Fair Process Manual is distributed to all incoming students each semester. We also developed a receipt form which students sign to acknowledge that they received the Manual and promise to read it; students receive a copy of that form and the original is filed in their certification file.

The Fair Process Manual refers to the importance of the development of interpersonal, social, and behavioral competencies deemed essential for the profession. We needed to be specific about what those competencies were so that we could communicate them clearly to our incoming students. We gathered the faculty together and brainstormed the essential behaviors we needed to observe in our students and designed a list we call "Professional Standards for Teacher Education Students." This list is divided into five categories: responsibility, integrity, attitude, respect, and service and describes the expectations (everything from appropriate attire to being punctual to volunteering time to the community) we have; the list also reiterates our division's mission statement. We distribute it at our Professional Skills Lab and discuss it each semester in our classes when we review the syllabus for our course.

We also use a system we call "Yellow Lights" in which our faculty record anecdotally any incidents which cause them concern. These are sent to the program director so she can track our students' progress and meet with them to discuss the concerns. We also work with our Student Disabilities Services center regarding students who have self-disclosed their disabilities; faculty are notified each semester of any students needing accommodations in order to be successful. This process is handled in a confidential manner in order to protect students' rights.

Concluding thoughts

The development of our Professional Skills Lab, Fair Process Manual, and Yellow Lights system, and the more consistent implementation of our policies and procedures has led to four years with no lawsuits filed against

us. We need to prepare the most effective teachers we can in order to meet the needs of today's students. We must protect our institutions and we ought to feel confident about the defensibility of our professional judgments so that we can continue to prepare future teachers of the highest quality. We can do this if we study the experiences of our colleagues in other professional programs and learn to develop and then apply consistently our policies and procedures.

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A QUALIFIED SPECIAL EDUCATOR FOR EVERY STUDENT: WHY THIS ISN'T HAPPENING AND WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

Overview of the National Issues

Teacher shortages in the United States are the largest in the history of our country (Pipho, 1998). These shortages include all categories of special educators and are not limited to any specific geographic region (Billingsley, 1993; Boe, Cook, Bobbitt & Terhanian, 1998; Brownell & Smith, 1992). Shortages of special education professionals have been seen in rural and urban districts alike (Lauritzen & Friedman, 1993). In many cases, attrition of teachers in rural settings has been more significant because the loss of one special education teacher could put an entire small district in jeopardy (Thurston & Sebastian, 1996). In rural settings, which often have few special educators on staff, retention is a critical issue (Koury, Ludlow, & Weinke, 1991).

Rural Impact

Shortages of certified special education teachers are most critical in rural areas of the country (Koury, Ludlow, & Weinke, 1991). Although the total number of special education teachers needed in rural areas is not as large as the number in urban areas, filling these open teaching positions may be more problematic (Thurston & Sebastian, 1996). Rural special education teachers may be difficult to recruit and may not stay as long in their positions thus creating higher levels of attrition and greater continual demand for teachers in rural areas. In a survey of 158 rural special education teachers, Westling and Whitten (1996) found that only 57% of the special education teachers surveyed reported that they were likely to be in their current positions in 5 years.

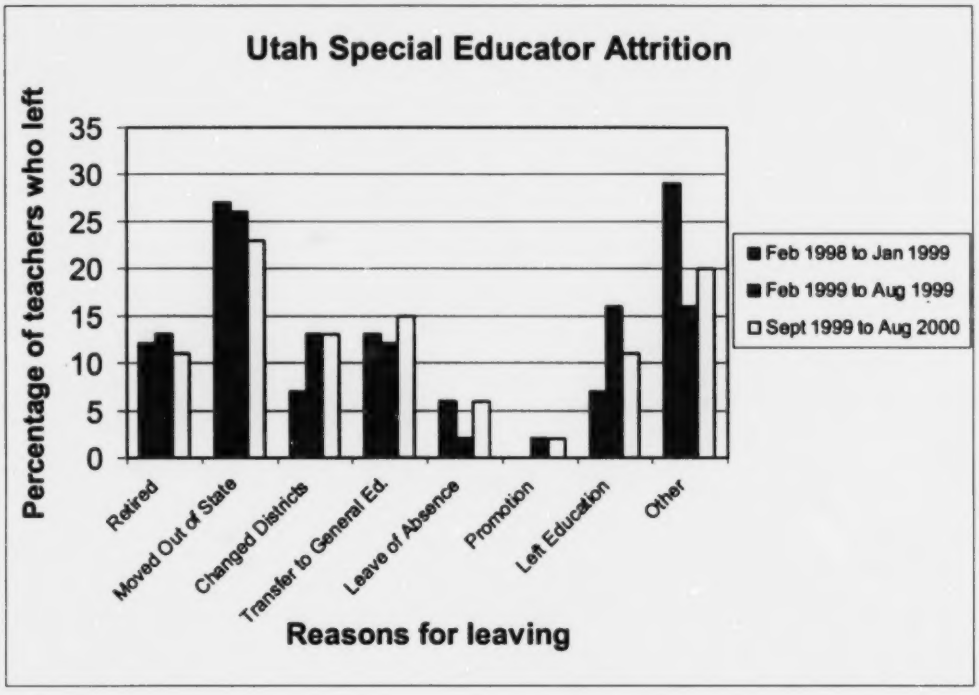
Reasons why Utah special education teachers left their positions have been explored in a three-year study of special education attrition conducted by Utah State University. The causes and patterns of attrition in the rural state of Utah have been analyzed, giving valuable insight into how the loss of good special education teachers can be prevented.

An in-depth follow-up study looking specifically at special education teachers who transfer to regular education teaching positions was conducted as well. Findings indicate that one of the main reasons why special educators transfer to regular education is because they want to teach more and avoid the frustrations of paperwork.

By looking at the reasons why special education teachers are leaving their classroom positions, universities can better prepare teachers who have the skills needed to remain in a classroom. Administrators can develop strategies to provide teachers with the inservice and support necessary for good teachers to continue to teach (Adams, 2001).

Scope of the Problem in Utah

Utah is experiencing critical special education teacher shortages in all areas of the state. In response to a long history of chronic shortages, the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) created a critical personnel shortages committee to study the problem. The committee is comprised of district special education directors, university special education faculty, and USOE staff. In a 1997-2000 study commissioned by the committee, researchers found that approximately 10% of the special education teachers working in Utah schools left the classroom each year (Adams, Menlove, & Salzberg, 2001). Many of these vacated special education teaching positions were filled with non-licensed "teachers." In some cases these "teachers" were long-term substitutes without college degrees or special education training. The Utah Attrition Study was conducted to determine the amount of attrition occurring in the state of Utah among special education personnel, and to find out the specific reasons why special education personnel are leaving. The most common reason for leaving listed by special education teachers and speech language pathologists was that they "moved out of state". Psychologists reported "retirement" and "moved out of state" as the two most common reasons for leaving positions (Adams, Menlove, & Salzberg, 2001). The next most common reason for leaving listed by all special education professionals was "other", which can include any number of personal reasons (Adams, Menlove, & Salzberg, 2001).



Special education teachers transferring to general education positions contribute to the shortages of special education teachers in Utah. In a separate study, Adams (2001) looked at the reasons Utah special education teachers transferred to regular education positions and the level of satisfaction these teachers reported in their general education positions. Survey results indicated that the respondents were somewhat to very dissatisfied with the non-instructional aspects associated with their special education position. These non-instructional aspects included paperwork, student discipline, support from others, class size, student placements, meetings, and legal issues.

While the respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied with the non-instructional aspects associated with their special education position, they did not feel this way about the non-instructional duties associated with their general education position. They were satisfied to very satisfied regarding the non-instructional duties of their

general education position. They were also satisfied to very satisfied with the instructional duties in both their special education and general education positions. In fact, almost one-third of the respondents listed love of teaching as the factor that influenced them to transfer to general education rather than pursing another career. The non-instructional aspects associated with special education play a significant role in influencing special education teachers' decisions to transfer to general education.

Level of Satisfaction with [redacted] Instructional and Noninstructional Aspects

Aspect	1 Very Satisfied	2 Satisfied	3 Somewhat Dissatisfied	4 Very dissatisfied
Instructional	22	20	8	1
	43%	39%	16%	2%
Noninstructional	3	9	15	24
	6%	18%	29%	47%

(Adams, 2001)

Level of Satisfaction with [redacted] Instructional and Noninstructional Aspects

Aspect	1 Very Satisfied	2 Satisfied	3 Somewhat Dissatisfied	4 Very Dissatisfied
Instructional	32	16	2	1
	63%	31%	4%	2%
Noninstructional	24	20	7	0
	47%	39%	14%	

(Adams, 2001)

The respondents in this study indicated that they wanted to teach, they enjoyed teaching, and were satisfied with the teaching aspects of education. However, teachers reported that they were frustrated and unhappy with the non-teaching aspects of special education, particularly paperwork. If the time and physical demands of the non-teaching aspects were reduced or eliminated, perhaps special education attrition may be reduced.

Factors that might have influenced the Teacher to Remain in Special Education

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
Administrative factors			
	Assistance with paperwork	11	22%
	Additional teachers/aides	11	22%
	Better salary	10	20%
	Smaller caseload	7	14%
	Better/more materials/resources	5	10%
	Increase in time for non-teaching duties	4	8%
	Reduction in non-teaching duties	3	6%
	Position available	2	4%
	More space to work in	2	4%
	Parental training	1	2%
	Better mentor	1	2%
	Better supplemental services	1	2%
	Another placement	1	2%
	Additional training	1	2%
	More flexibility	1	2%
Support Factors			
	Appreciation/respect	6	12%
	District support	5	10%
	School collaboration	3	6%
	Admin/building support	2	4%
	Special education department support	1	2%
	Recognition/affiliation of teaching	1	2%
	Better IEP meetings/support	1	2%
Other teaching options			
	Other choices/opportunities	7	14%
Nothing would have influenced me to stay		6	12%

(Adams, 2001)

Potential Strategies which will Promote Retention of Special Educators

While special education professionals report that they like the teaching aspects of their jobs, they are burdened by the administrative functions of the job, in particular paper work (Adams, 2001). There are indications that support by principals and administrators can relieve much of this frustration (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001). Using technology and organizational skills may help manage the paperwork loads associated with the provision of special education services (CEC, 2001). Ongoing inservice training and continued education regarding best practices can also better prepare teachers to manage the stress of the special education classroom. Using mentoring or professional peer coaching activities may assist teachers to use skills learned through ongoing training in the classroom, thus minimizing frustration (Askvig, B. A. & Garnes, L., 2000). All of these strategies need to be fully explored in order to better meet the needs of special education professionals.

Conclusions

These data are helpful and allow university faculty and school administrators to better understand the issues of retaining qualified special education teachers in rural settings. This understanding could lead to the development of strategies, which would minimize attrition and promote retention of special education teachers.

If qualified special education teachers are not available in the classroom, children will not have access to high quality education. Considering variables and issues that lead to teacher attrition and reviewing factors that lead to teacher retention will impact the availability of appropriately qualified special education teachers in rural settings.

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STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES IN PRESERVICE GENERAL EDUCATION

Introduction

Today's educators teach in very diverse classrooms. Thanks to a growing movement towards inclusion, these classrooms now include students with a wide variety of special needs. Fortunately, rapidly expanding technologies offer significant options that enhance the potential for students who may have difficulty reading or writing.

Taking advantage of digital technology to help students gain both content knowledge and reading/writing skills can be a daunting task for many educators, particularly those involved in undergraduate teacher education programs. The universities often do not have "space" in their required courses for this content to be fully explored. In addition, our university is similar to others in that there is only one special education course (one credit hour) for those preparing to teach in the general education classroom. Therefore, there is limited time to include the actual development of technological skills along with the knowledge base regarding instructional design of digital or web-based instructional materials that incorporates strategies for students with special needs.

One option is to collaborate with instructors from the technology courses to create opportunities for the preservice general education students to develop strategies that allow the creation of digitally formatted materials for the diverse needs of students.

The objectives of this paper are to briefly introduce the two courses and explain how the collaboration occurred. Most of the paper will be devoted to sharing the experience of the collaboration and the opportunities provided by two classes working together. The third objective of the paper is to provide samples of work that were developed through the collaborative process.

Special Topic courses in the Preservice Teacher Education Program

Developing future teachers who know how to use modern learning technologies to improve student learning is a major challenge facing our nation's teacher preparation system. (U.S. Department of Education, 2000) The Teacher Education Program at our university has a secondary education emphasis. Students major in their content area and then pick up teaching certification in that content area. Students participate in three block professional semesters, which includes classes in methodology, class management, and human relations. There are other courses that are required but not part of the block and our collaborative process involves two of these courses. The courses in this project include one course that integrates technology into the classroom curriculum while the second course focuses on teaching learners with special needs in the general secondary education classroom. Together they form three credits within the system.

The technology integration course, Computer-Based Teaching and Learning, focuses on the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards developed with teacher education in mind. For one of the projects, the students create a WebQuest, which is an online inquiry project that allows students to learn the fundamentals of technology integration. While many of the standards were examined throughout the course, traditionally assistive technology and universal design principles have not been focused on. The ISTE Standards do address the idea of assistive technology through indicators.

Meanwhile, the Teaching Students With Special Needs course was providing an overview of the various strategies used in enhancing diverse learners opportunities in the classroom. However, there wasn't much time to include the technological tools that could make production of classroom materials for diverse learners much easier and accessible.

In examining content of the courses, the WebQuest project completed in the Technology course seemed like an ideal candidate for collaborative efforts between the two courses. The students were required to post their WebQuests online. This allowed the students in the special needs course to examine the projects at anytime and on any internet connected computer. The project also required development of curriculum materials and the collaboration of this project would introduce both groups of students to instructional strategies that encouraged problem-based, collaborative learning in the virtual setting.

WebQuests

A WebQuest is "an inquiry-oriented activity in which most or all of the information used by learners is drawn from the Web" (Dodge, 2001). WebQuests consist of a task that engages students in authentic problem solving using prescribed processes and requiring some final product in which the web resources can be synthesized. The WebQuest process is used in the technology course as one of the means to fulfill many of the (ISTE) Standards Professional Performance Profile indicators. The only proficiencies not previously easily met were the exposure to Universal Design for Learning principles and assistive technology and along with the opportunity to peer teach their lesson. The technology course used this format in the spring 2001 semester and found that students really enjoyed the process and could demonstrate ISTE proficiencies. The Fall 2001 semester students also constructed WebQuests posting them for the students in the special needs class to examine. The WebQuests constructed in these two courses can be found online at http://learn.sdstate.edu/webquest/index.htm.

Universal Design for Learning Principles

The principles of Universal Design for Learning focus on the design of instructional materials and activities that allows the learning goals to be achievable by individuals with wide differences in their abilities to see, hear, speak, move, read, write, understand English, organize, engage and remember (Orkwis & McLane, 1998). The principles for Universal Design for Learning include multiple representations of content, multiple means of expression and control, and multiple means of engagement (CAST, Universal Design for Learning). Universal Design for Learning implies the use of technology in curriculum materials as the content is in digital format. Technology allows teachers the ability to meet these principles by providing various mediums to compensate for the differences in student's skills and abilities.

Collaboration

Web-based collaboration at the pre-service level has the potential to enhance educational practice in K–12 schools (Slowinski, Anderson, & Reinhart, J. 2001). While more typically taking place in the K-12 arena, this form of collaboration is less frequent in higher education but just as valuable. For this project, collaboration needed to be modeled so students would understand that teaching diverse students through collaborative efforts is necessary in the K-12 learning environment, (Johnson, Pugach, & Devlin, 1990).

The Process of Collaboration

During the summer and early fall, 2001, there were many discussions as to how best accomplish our goals: 1) to provide students in the special needs course new ideas in technology integration and 2) to provide students in the technology integration course an understanding of the Universal Design of Learning Principles. A pilot for Fall 2001 seemed the best approach to the ideas being generated.

During the next few weeks, each course focused on its specific mission. In the special needs course, students learned briefly about special education law, possible characteristics of potential students with special needs, and some options for teaching/learning strategies. In the technology integration course, students learned how to identify student characteristics they would have to account for, design curriculum and instruction and finally

develop and implement their WebQuest. During this process, students were reminded to keep their websites user-friendly. While we did not cover many of the Universal Design of Learning principles in the technology course, students did understand the importance of making the website useful. We emphasized keeping the website simple, to use pictures/graphics that were appropriate to the content discussed, to keep the pages short and to chunk information. Many of these items are already reinforced by virtue of the WebQuest template.

Through collaboration, both groups of students expanded their application of technological skills that includes assistive technology. Hopefully, this project will increase their potential for providing enhanced curricular options for their diverse students.

Results of Collaboration

While the pilot didn't accomplish everything we set out to do, we did gain enough information to help us formulate ideas for Spring 2002. Our plan was to introduce the concepts earlier in the respective classes and encourage ongoing interaction between the technology students and the "non-experts". That plan was revised for spring, 2002 when the teaching assignment changed for one of the faculty members. The current process will still work but we will try it with a graduate Educational Technology course.

During fall, 2001, after the students in the technology integration course completed their WebQuests, the students in the special needs course each selected one WebQuest to evaluate based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning, readability, needed social/group skills, etc. Generally, the evaluations were fairly positive and the students in the special needs classes also expressed an interest in using this type of project in the future with their students. They felt that students with diverse educational needs would be empowered during this activity and that, typically, positive social interactions could result from the WebQuests.

Most of the students in the special needs courses commented on the opportunities for secondary students to enhance social skills. "The [WebQuest] lessons are great examples of lessons written with a variety of learning styles in mind…The project not only provides many opportunities, but also forces students to interact with an entire group. The WebQuest promotes good social skills by making students discover new theory and then defend it within the group," wrote one student. Another individual also commented on the potential for increased social skills. After investigating a WebQuest on Wild Land Firefighting and Fire Safety, he stated, "Some people have a hard time talking and sharing when put in a group, [but] maybe this would allow them the opportunity to open up and share with the group their feelings on the matter." A third student wrote, "This is a great opportunity for students to work in cooperative groups and practice communication skills and develop social skills in a non-threatening manner."

The students in the special needs course also liked the variety of options typically used by the secondary students to demonstrated understanding. Regarding a WebQuest devoted to the Industrial Revolution, one student commented, "The groups are able to present their case in any way they would like. They may make posters, a power point, just get up and talk, or in any creative way the group would like. This allows students to express themselves in a way they might understand better…Through their cases and their website there certainly [are] a number of ways for students to express their understanding or knowledge of the content. I think that this is a super lesson." Still another advocated using a WebQuest featuring the book, The Grapes of Wrath. "It definitely allows for multiple means of engagement as the students can read books, visit other websites, do library research, and even possibly conduct some interviews with people of that time period, since many are still living today. The different ways in which students can present their understanding come through the PowerPoint, artistic expression, poetry, and other areas. It is a very diverse project and allows expression of oneself in many different ways."

While most of the students in the special needs course were very positive regarding the multiple means of engagement and expression offered by the WebQuests they reviewed, a few expressed reservations about the colors and background designs used by the students in the technology course. One student wrote, "In just looking at the colors and design first, I am having trouble adjusting my vision to reading the material. The background isn't a solid color; it was more of a wash type of gray. For me personally, I have trouble reading anything that isn't on a solid color. And the bright blue links on the gray was sore to my eyes…Just the color could give problems to students trying to do this [WebQuest]. Too much focusing on reading could mean missing information on the [WebQuest]." As she noted, the actual way the WebQuest is designed can either increase or decrease its readability and effectiveness.

Since this activity was actually done at the end of the semester, the WebQuest designers did not receive the feedback. This we plan to change for Spring, 2002, as we anticipate the graduate students in the technology course will complete drafts of their WebQuests earlier and therefore the students in the undergraduate special needs course will be able to evaluate them mid semester with ample time for feedback to the original designers.

Based on the feedback of the students in the Special Needs course, a rubric has been developed that will provide a better benchmark for the assessment of usability of the WebQuest. For the fall, 2001, semester, each student in the special needs course wrote a short paper offering constructive feedback regarding the usability of the WebQuests with secondary students with special needs. While these did provide good suggestions and comments, a more structured evaluation rubric would be helpful.

Conclusion

Our state has seriously tried to enhance the technological skills of classroom and preservice teachers. Through collaboration, these two courses provide a stronger knowledge base and expanded skills that should enable our potential teachers in rural areas to increase their awareness of the possibilities that are available using technology integration as a means to provide diverse digital learning materials.

Sometimes what seems to be a wild idea turns into a worthwhile project to do. The idea of working together to introduce students to new concepts that are important in their education as potential teachers has provided much conversation and opportunities. It also provides a model for our students to see that collaboration between professionals and between students is a beneficial tool in education. Our main goals were accomplished and we feel that with the improvements scheduled for spring, 2002, our students will have increased opportunities in the area of assistive technology.

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TOOLS OF THE TRADE: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE COLLABORATION OF EDUCATORS IN RURAL SCHOOLS

The students who are successful at making sense of the world are those who believe that the world makes sense. Education must make sense to the students if they are to use what education offers to make sense out of their world. While no educator would purposefully engage in practices that make learning more difficult, inadvertently this is the end result in many classrooms. Students often struggle to make sense of their education and leave school not in command of a world that makes sense to them, but simply as a survivor.

Making education make sense for students given the diversity of individuals, their worldly experiences, the external demands in curriculum and assessment is not an easy job. However, if educators adhere to some basic concepts they can facilitate students making sense of the world. The goal here is to offer a beginning list of content considerations that have been effective in rural education classrooms in fostering education that makes sense to students. These considerations will be broken down into three general categories: Curriculum, Classroom Management, and Building Management.

Curriculum

Curriculum must begin where students are and not with page one of the curriculum guides. Howard Gardner noted, "The biggest mistake of the past centuries in teaching has been to treat all children as if they were variants of the same individual, and thus to feel justified in teaching them the same subjects in the same ways" (Siegel & Shaughnessy, 1994, p.564). There are many inherent implications when the curriculum becomes responsive of the needs of students instead of the normative demands of legislators, textbook companies, etc.

Empirical Teaching vs. Rational Learning "Children learn for the sake of learning; their minds seek knowledge like the eye seeks light" (Locke, 1693 p. 118-119). Learning is not a difficult process. All children learn to communicate, develop motor skills, internalize social morays, etc., all before school age. By exposing students to situations that take advantage of their natural curiosity learning can be promoted. Kamii (1985) citing Piaget's work noted that children are motivated to construct knowledge for themselves and that the constructed relationship (logico-mathematical) based on interaction (sensory based) with the physical environment is much more important than any empirical learning. For example, when a toy manufacturer makes a product they create many near-identical toys. However, when a child gets one of the toys and plays with it and develops an experience base with that particular toy it is no longer like all the rest. To an outsider it may appear that all the toys are alike but the child knows better. When a student constructs a concept that rational learning has a profound and lasting impact on the student cognitive structure and hence life decision making tools. Educators have a choice of constructing the information for the students and trying to coerce them to ingest it or develop an environment where students can actively construct their own understanding of a concept.

The difference between an empiricist and rationalist classroom can be seen in the following illustration. One teacher passed out calculators to all the students and had them follow along with her as she demonstrated the functions of all the keys on her overhead projector version of the same calculator. Students spent 35 minutes watching and following the teacher. This teacher constructed the knowledge for the children and then worked at getting them to integrate it through a teacher lead demonstration. Another teacher passed out calculators to her class the week prior to beginning her lessons on calculator usage. She let the students play with the calculators for several

minutes and then asked them to hypothesize about the function of each button. The students spent their free time rest of the week working on the their hypothesis. Students who knew nothing of multiplication figured out that pushing 4+4+4= was the same as pushing 3 x 4=. Students constructed logico-mathematical knowledge for themselves instead of having it delivered to them prepackaged. Similarly, a fifth grade learning disable student had trouble multiplying his 9's, 11's and 12's. After analyzing the table he discovered a pattern that allowed him to think the problems through and obtain the products by logical processing of a self-constructed algorithm instead of the rote mechanics of the teacher prepared algorithm.

When students are given situations that are relevant to their world and interests they will construct a personal knowledge that is much more profound. However, establishing an environment with situations that stimulate personally constructed knowledge is more difficult to create than using empirically created lessons. It is important that teachers get together and support each other in developing learning environments where children are presented with the raw materials (physical) from which to build their own cognitive understanding (logico-mathematical). Through collaboration teachers can brainstorming ideas that take advantage of the resources available, incorporate the contextual world of the students, assess intrapersonal strengths and weaknesses of students and faculty, and design an environment where the academic skills developed instead of taught.

Curriculum has typically been viewed as a product that if formed, packaged, and then delivered for students to absorb. The empiricist view that knowledge is constructed for children is an appealing idea, especially given the time constraints of schools. But the logico-mathematical position supported by Piaget's work indicates that children do not really know how to integrate a content into their daily lives unless they construct the knowledge for themselves. This may seem to be trivial point but in reality it is a major rift between the predominant educational philosophies found is practice today.

Responsive Rational Curriculum. Responsive curriculum requires that the teacher make a concerted effort to get to know and keep pace with the skills development of each student. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, contextual level of understanding, etc. of each student allows the teacher to create a learning environment that allows individuals to actively make sense of new content skills. The students are provided within contextual situations, designed to be moderately challenging. Research has shown that if a task is too challenging the student feels a heightened level of threat and withdraws without developing ownership of the skill (Hart, 1975). Equally non-productive is a task that is too low-stress as it requires little active thought from the student and hence is not integrated into the existing cognitive framework.

Creating an educational environment where students feel comfortable, part of a learning community, challenged appropriately, and are actively engaged in developing their own sense of content mastery is not a textbook based program. It will emerge from the respectful environment as teachers and students work together to explore content as applied to the real world. Open-ended activities or contextual situations that require students to develop procedures as a part of the product have been shown to increase student's learning while reducing discipline issues (Kamii, 1985). Currah and Felling (1997) developed a first through ninth grade curriculum to teach fractions using a game format. The games engage students in a variety of situations that require them to manipulate objects, communicate their thinking about fractions to the other players, as well as record their fractional representations in mathematical form. Students enjoy the game atmosphere and format while the real world ties that are included in the activities provide for expansion of contextual content relations.

The collaborative process between teachers will be smoother if there is a cognitive awareness of the degree of stress that is maintained within classrooms by the various types of activities. The level and quantity of open-ended tasks as well as the way student stress is dealt are highly correlated factors in the formation of a successful collaboration or are generally the basis for lines that are drawn for an impending territorial war.

Integration of Non-Traditional Curriculum Tools. The curriculum defines the skills that students need to have mastery of according to the guidelines of the learned societies, national, state, and local authorities. The teacher job from a constructivist position is to establish an environment that will provide the students with the opportunity and tools to develop these skills in a meaningful and purposeful manner. The tools that are used for such development should be at the discretion of the teacher. The teacher should survey all the tools and based on the known needs of the students select a variety of tools to be placed in the learning environment. Textbook should

be taking a backseat to the ever expanding variety of formats of classroom instructional tools are available for today's students.

The special education teacher is often at the forefront in utilization of new technology and/or adapting curriculum innovations as they part of the constant vigilance to find ways to address each child's strengths and weaknesses. These same teachers are often the ones that adapt common everyday objects into cheap efficient manipulatives. A byproduct of the special and regular education teachers' collaboration is the infusion of alternative curriculum tools into the regular education classroom. It is the diversity of tools in the educational environment as we move away from the 2-deminional textbook that will facilitates the self-development of meaningful skills by students. A third grade teacher along with her collaborative special education partner devised 5 games around a statistics and probability objective. The games were made from readily available materials that included dice, cards, computer programs, pop bottle lids (that the kids help collect), one inch tiles donated by a local store, laminated poster size game boards constructed as part of a 5th grade art project, etc. The expense of the weeklong unit was minimal and yet students were joyfully engaged in activities that facilitated their construction of knowledge and as a bonus discipline problems were reduced. This same material could have been presented to the students in an organized formulaic textbook approach without all the extras but the quality of learning for all children would have been dramatically diminished.

Classroom Management

While classroom management is an encompassing topic that includes instructional events, room arrangements, procedures, time sequence, etc. we have selected three areas that are particularly pertinent to the collaborative process for rural educators. The three areas to be addressed include homework, grading, participation opportunities, and the development of daily instructional events.

Physical Arrangement. The physical arrangement within a classroom can isolate students or be inclusive by nature. Research has shown that there is an inverse relationship between learning and the position in the classroom (Good & Brophy, 2000). The more isolated a student is from the teacher and other students the less is learned. The array (six rows of eight chairs) seating template is one of the least effective for whole classroom learning. The further a child is removed from perceived access to the teacher the flatter the learning curve becomes.

Several tactics have been used to combat the isolation issue. Creative room arrangements where access and mobility are kept at the forefront can increase individual student's learning and decrease discipline problems. Classroom arrangements where rows are 3-4 seats deep and allow the teacher and students to have ready access to each other as well as the learning materials in the classroom are the most productive environments. Alternative room arrangements may include learning stations where students rotate throughout the room as the demands of the learning task change. Marilyn Burns (2000) promotes forming and reforming learning groups as the demands of each day's learning task change. A key point in planning for success is that the groups that are formed should be at random or be planned by the teacher. Students should not be allowed to form their own learning groups as it can lead to a conflict between individual student agendas and the learning task agenda.

Homework. Epstein (1998) identified ten common reasons that homework is given. The ten reasons were: Practice, preparation, participation, personal development, peer interactions, parent-child relations, parent-teacher communication, public relations, policy, and punishment. Good & Brophy (2000) note that practice, preparation, personal development, and parent-child relations are the only valid reasons to assign homework. Given that these are the only four valid reasons for homework there are considerations and implications that need to be examined. If homework is assigned for practice and preparation then the amount of homework should be limited to 20 minutes per content area a day. If too much is assigned students learn to dislike school and the personal development goal becomes void. In the classroom the environment is designed to allow a child to explore and construct personal knowledge while being guided by peers and the teacher. When a child is at home often the feedback systems that help a child further exploration are not available. Frustration and discourse for learning are often the byproducts of homework.

Teachers can also cooperatively plan their homework assignment and assessments so that students are not overwhelmed. A small rural school in Washington organized, by grade level, according to a schedule. All students had reading oriented assignments four nights a week. In addition on Monday and Wednesday evenings each week

the students would have Language Arts and Science while, on Tuesday and Thursday they would have Math, Social Studies/Geography. Students were also assessed once a week in each area but on a similar schedule: Tuesday - Language Arts, Wednesday -Math & Science, etc. Maintaining a consistent, scheduled rotation of homework and assessments made the extracurricular work much more manageable which, parents and students appreciated.

Prior to making each homework assignment ask if it is a valid assignment, given for a valid reason. Some research suggests that homework below the 5th grade (except in reading, applied foreign language, and playing a musical instrument) has little benefit and may actually be harmful to the child's learning potential in later grades (Elkind, 1992).

Participation. Classroom behavior management and instructional strategies have been linked very successfully for many years. Mary Budd Rowe in 1972 developed the concept of "wait-time" which allowed students the opportunity for "think-time". Rowe (1972) defines wait time, as is the amount of silent time a teacher allows to pass before and after a student response to a question. Rowe's research documented that teachers typically wait less than 30 seconds after asking a question before calling on students to respond. For many students this provides little opportunity to process the question and formulate an answer. Her research documented that a teacher waited 0.9 seconds after a student response before asking another question. The average teacher asked three to five questions with in one minute. The concepts of "wait-time" and "think-time" can provide teachers with an effective instructional strategy to increase student active participation in learning, which in turn increases time on task. With increased student participation in the learning process the management of the classroom and instruction is maximized.

The research to support the bases for this was initially documented by Benjamin Bloom (1976). Bloom believed that effective methods of estimating the quality of instruction for a group or individuals are to document the extent of the students' overt or covert active participation in the learning process. He continues to directly tie the overall quality of instruction with the issue of classroom management. Bloom advocates that when the overall quality of instruction is poor, teachers can to expect to have discipline and student management problems. Therefore, increasing active participation by more students will decrease discipline and student management problems.

Bloom (1976), Goodlad (1983), and Rowe (1978) produced a significant body of research over the past three decades that have provided teachers with instructional opportunity to increase student active participation through the use of overt and covert active participation. Active participation is the process by which the minds of learners are consistently engaged in the learning task. Goodlad (1983) stated that if academic learning does not engage students, something else will-that something else takes away the student's attention from the learning task. The benefit of overt participation is that the teacher can readily assess the whole class by checking for understanding several times during an instructional period and not needing to wait until a test at the end of the week.

Overt, meaning observable, something that can be seen and thus it can be measured. Examples of overt phrases included, "draw", "write", "signal". The use of hand signal, number fans, and number cards provide a quick assessment. Asking the class to signal "yes" or "no", through sign language or response cards is very effective. The teacher can pose the question and she/he can readily observe the responds of the whole class not just the answer of one student at a time with the more traditional approach. With this information the teacher can assess his/her teaching and determined if reteaching the concept is needed.

Covert, meaning covered up or hidden, is typically a behavior that cannot be seen. However, covert participation is very important and when paired with overt participation can assist students in the learning process. Covert prompts can include, "think about", imagine", visualize in your mind". A teacher can ask the student to think about a solution to a problem (covert) and then request that the students turn to a neighbor and discuss (overt) their solutions. Wolf (1986) supports the inclusion of overt and covert active participation as a means to increase student learning. While many may view this as only an instructional specific modification, the essence of this provides students with an enriched opportunity to participate in a variety of styles and offers the teacher an effective and efficient way of assessing the class's or checking for understanding, thus increasing positive classroom management.

Instructional Events. The work of Gagne (1992) emphasized the difference between planning a lesson and designing an effective instructional sequence. While the two are related it is important for novice teachers or experienced teachers that are novice to a content area to do more in depth planning for the instructional delivery of a lesson. Teachers who are well versed in the content and experienced often do the instructional events as a matter of habit. Regardless of the experience level when teachers begin to plan lessons together it is advisable to have a template of to design the classroom actions around. Gagne's instructional events provide an effective and easily constructed format. The effective instructional sequence is made up of nine instructional events that may be utilized in the order that is most appropriate for each specific lesson. While order and even repetition of the instructional event may vary it is vital that all nine events are utilized during the instructional sequence. Each of the nine instructional events is briefly summarized below.

- Attention Getting Devise – Devise a variety of ways that are comfortable for you as the teacher and effective in getting your students' attention. The goal is to relate the attention getting device to the lesson that is to be presented so continuity is maintained. Consider the use of cues in math and science to alert students to content.
- Inform the Learner of the Objective – Let the students know what skill will be taught that day and what will be expected from each student at the end of the lesson.
- Recall Prerequisite Learning – If the objective for today requires students to possess pertinent information that information should be quickly reviewed prior to beginning the new lesson.
- Teach the New Content – Provide the students with activities that require the new skill(s) and have them raise questions as they work with the task/skill. Manipulatives should be readily available for use in the instructional, guided practice, and individual phases of the lesson. Students must be actively involved at high rates of participation. Demonstrate and provide a permanent product as needed of the content. Teachers may also embed the use of memory devices such as mnemonics to assist learners in acquiring new content (Mastroprieri & Scruggs, 2000; Miller & Mercer, 1998)
- Group/Guided Practice Note: Students work in groups or as a class with an organized set of problem solving opportunities. By working in groups (pairs preferred) the students get to guide and validate each other's work. (Do not allow students to select a partner. As the teacher you know the strengths and weaknesses of your students and are much more capable of pairing students that will compliment each other on a learning task so, plan ahead.)
- Individual Practice – Since the goal is to get all students to master the skill it is essential that after the guided practice phase each student be given individual opportunities to demonstrate their skills.
- Feedback – The teacher should provide non-judgmental feedback aimed at improving the student's performance. This should be task specific and yet acknowledge effort, ideas, and risk-taking.
- Assessment – This is an ongoing process that helps the instructor and the students monitor the progress that is being made. The major purpose of assessment is to guide the teacher in constructing learning activities for future lessons.
- Retention and Transfer – The goal is to relate the skills that were developed throughout the lesson to the students' lives and real world experiences.

Building Management

The structure within a building can hamper or promote active collaboration between faculty, parents, counselors, staff, and even students. As with curriculum and classroom management there are many areas that could be review and discussed but teaming and validation have been selected for presentation in this paper. These two building structure modifications were selected as they have been shown to be effective in rural schools, do not require financial expenditure by the school, and they have the potential to impact all students.

Validation. One of the worst things that can happen to a child is that he/she becomes invisible. We all need validation and yet so many students and teachers do not receive any positive recognition. An expectation in every school building and system should be that there is an ongoing process for validating students and faculty.

Many of the everyday operations of a school building as well as the classroom are potential tools for validating the worth of a child. However, equally true is that if teachers and administrators do not plan for these validating experiences the daily operations have a tendency to gravitate towards a devaluing of students. Even the grading system found in the majority of the classrooms is designed by its very nature to validate the flaws a student makes not the successes he/she may have. Recognizing the accomplishments and celebrating the successes a student

has would produce a much more psychologically secure environment and in effect reduce student insecurities. These type of modifications are not hard to make and the effects are dramatic.

A small rural school in southern Texas was plagued by truancy, vandalism, violence, etc. The school counselor gave each teacher three index cards and asked that they write the names of their three "most" troubled students on the cards. At the next faculty meeting the cards were collected and thrown into a hopper. All school personnel (teachers, counselor, administration, secretaries, janitors, cooks, bus drivers, etc.) were then ask to randomly draw two cards. The faculty and staff were asked to make a concerted effort to connect with the two students they drew on a daily basis. Students were invited to have lunch with the faculty or staff member. Some students were given special seats on the bus so the bus driver could get to know them better. Some students were given passes to the sporting events as special guests of the faculty or staff member. Each day 136 of the highest risk children were recognized by an adult. Over the course of four months the number of disciplinary referrals dropped over 40%. Parents, teachers, staff members, and students noticed the difference in their school. Validation is an exponentially powerful resource tool that cost little to implement.

Horizontal & Vertical Team Planning Sessions. European rural schools commonly utilize multiage classrooms so that the older students can help in the education and management of younger children. While multiage groups are used in the United States it is rare and usually limited to special education classrooms. Certain aspects have been integrated into some building management plans, such as the school-within-a-school and looping options. The school-with-in-a-school designed to allow large buildings with multiple classrooms to place build teams of K-5/6 grade groups of teachers as a micro school within the larger school. Each micro school has lunch, recess, etc. together which allows for vertical teaming and collaboration between teachers from the K-5/6 contents. If we extend this concept to also allow for common planning times for the grade level teachers the best of both worlds can be created. Teachers can actively plan and do cross-age programs as well as build cohesion within each grade level. The vertical and horizontal teaming approach help to also build community within the school. Teachers get to work together as well as the students at each grade level and across grade levels have quality contact with each other. While teaming takes planning and time the benefits are bountiful.

Summary

Each topic discussed in this paper has the potential to enhance learning, collaboration, building management, and joy within the rural school setting. However, just like the textbook information passed down to students millions of times a day without active engagement this information has no power to produce a better school environment. It is up to each teacher, student, administrator, and parent to take ownership of the research findings in actively working to create that unique productive environment. Learning is power but as Einstein said, "Knowledge is advanced more by asking the right question than having the right answer." Ask questions and develop meaning from the answer you find.

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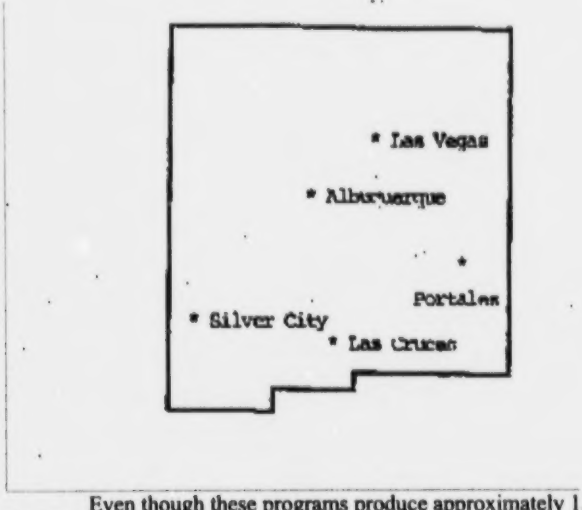
WHERE HAVE ALL THE TEACHERS GONE?

Introduction

The shortage of Special Education teachers in the state of New Mexico is rapidly becoming a critical issue. There are over 62,000 students who receive special education services in the state. Over 4,000 licensed, special education teachers are employed by the 89 school districts (NM Facts, 2001). Approximately 600 teachers are working as emergency hires (waivered teachers) in Special Education and as of the 2001- 2002 school year, over 245 positions remain unfilled (C. Martinez, personal communication, December 1, 2001).

New Mexico has five teacher preparation programs that are located in the Central, North, South, East, and West areas of the state; New Mexico State University in Las Cruces; The University of New Mexico in Albuquerque; New Mexico Highlands in Las Vegas; Western New Mexico University in Silver City; and Eastern New Mexico University in Portales (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Orientation Map of New Mexico



Even though these programs produce approximately 1,300 new teachers, in all, each year (NMCHE, NMSDE, & ECS, 2000), the demand for trained, licensed, and degreed special educators is still great. This is due, partly, to an overall decline in enrollment in the teacher education programs, increase in retirement, recruitment from other states, and the high attrition rate during the early years of teaching. To exacerbate the issue, it is predicted that the state will need over 300 new special educators each year for the next 10 years (The New Mexico Teacher Education Accountability Council, 2001).

School districts in New Mexico appear to be floundering in a pool of inexperienced teacher applicants who are seeking out a career change and excited to work with children with disabilities. Even though they have varied backgrounds and earned degrees in numerous fields, they often lack the knowledge and training in the areas of exceptionalities, accommodations, and information necessary to meet the individual needs of children in special education programs.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to investigate the characteristics of special education teachers working as emergency hires in the state of New Mexico. Specifically, the goals of the project were to (a) examine the cultural diversity of these teachers and their students, (b) examine the educational background of these teachers, (c) identify the relationship between teacher ethnicity and multicultural programming in the classroom, and (d) examine the opinions of these teachers with regard to Alternative Certification in special education. It was projected that by collecting this information, a greater insight into the needs of these teachers would be gained, and colleges and universities in the state would be better able to develop effective programming and in-service training workshops.

Methods

A survey was developed and a request to use human subjects was completed and submitted to the New Mexico State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to distribution. After approval of the IRB, the survey was distributed by mail to principals of schools within the state's 89 school districts. Elementary school, middle school, and high school principals were asked to duplicate and distribute the survey to emergency-hired special education teachers in their buildings. Surveys were returned via postage-paid return-mail envelopes. After the suggested due date had passed, survey reminders were mailed. Directions for completing the survey on line were provided in the second mailing.

Survey questions fell into two categories, (a) teacher data and (b) student data. Under the category of teacher data, questions elicited information from the following areas:

(a) educational background
(b) age
(c) marital status
(d) ethnicity
(e) years of experience in public school teaching
(f) years living in New Mexico
(g) years employed on a waiver
(h) enrollment in post secondary education – degree or licensure
(i) teaching multicultural issues in the classroom
(j) self identified disability or family member identified as having a disability
(k) number of years working with children with disabilities, and
(l) opinions on Alternative Certification.

Under the category of student data, information was elicited from the following areas:

(a) grade level
(b) type of program (i.e. inclusion or self-contained)
(c) number of students with disabilities on caseload
(d) gender of students
(e) ethnicity of students
(f) specific disabilities of students, and
(g) ancillary services provided.

Results

Eight hundred surveys were distributed and 208 were returned representing a return rate of 25%. May it be noted that all respondents did not answer all questions in the survey. Therefore, the term "identified" refers to those respondents who answered the specific question. Of the respondents who identified, 134 (64%) were female, and 57 (27 %) were male. The age range was 22 to 65 years old, mean age was 37, mode age was 33, and median age was 40. The study examined cultural diversity, educational backgrounds, opinions on Alternative Certification, relationships between teacher ethnicity and multicultural programming in the classroom, caseloads, exceptionalities of students served, and ancillary services.

Teacher Data

Cultural Diversity of Special Education Teachers and Their Students. Teachers self identified and provided the information on ethnicity for their students. Teacher ethnicity fell into four categories: Hispanic - 39, Anglo - 132, African American – 8, Asian - 2, Native American - Cherokee - 2, Navajo – 2, and Lacoda – 1. Four identified under the category of Other. Teachers claiming multiple ethnicities were grouped using their first identifier. For example, African American/Native American were classified as African American.

Table 1. Ethnicity Chart – Teachers

Teachers	No.	%
African American	8	4%
Anglo (white)	132	70%
Asian	2	1%
Hispanic	39	21%
Native American	4	2%
Other	4	2%

Teachers identified the ethnicity of their students in the same categories as they self identified. African Americans were reported 13% of the time. Anglo was reported 31%. Asian was reported 1% of the time. Hispanic was reported 38% of the time. And Native American (Apache, Zuni, Navajo, Pueblo, and Isleta tribes) was reported 16% of the time. In Table 2, the "Frequency of Ethnic Identification" refers to the percentage of times teachers reported the ethnic representation in their classroom.

Table 2. Frequency of Ethnic Identification - Students

Students	%
African American	13%
Anglo	31%
Asian	1%
Hispanic	38%
Native American	16%

Educational Backgrounds. Teachers hired on Special Education waivers in New Mexico are required to enroll in an accredited university and work toward a degree and/or licensure in the field. In order to maintain their waiver status, these individuals must take a minimum of nine credit hours per year working toward their degree and licensure. School districts may apply for waiver renewal until licensure is earned.

Based on the responses elicited, the following information describes the teaching experience of those surveyed:

- Over 50% of respondents report to be in their first year of waiver status; 40% are working toward licensure only, and 47% are working toward licensure and degrees.
- Teachers reported working in public school settings between 1 and 37 years; the mean is identified as 4.5 years.
- The range of years of experience with children with disabilities was <1 year to 30 years; the majority has 1 to 5 years of experience working with children with disabilities; the mode was identified as one year.
- Twenty-nine percent self-identified or identified a family member as having a disability.

Results from the survey indicated that 87% of the teachers hold college/university degrees. Bachelors' Degrees were held by 67.3% of the respondents. Doctorate Degrees were held by 2.4 % of the respondents. Masters' Degrees were held by 15.4 % of the respondents. Medical Degrees were held by .5% of the respondents. Education,

Elementary Education, English, and Physical Education were the four most frequently reported major fields of study.

Overall, 66 different major fields of study were reported. The top ten majors are presented in Table 3. All education majors are grouped under a general education category. Specifically, this category includes: Elementary Education, Art Education, Early Childhood Education, Education, General Education, Occupational Education, and Secondary Education. Special Education fields include: Special Education, Special Education Art, Special Education Elementary, and Special Education Physical Education. Although education was the most frequently reported major field of study, it was not the majority of all of the fields reported.

Table 3. Ten Most Frequent Major Fields of Study

Major	No.	Percentage
General Education	59	28.5%
English	13	6.3%
Physical Education	11	5.3%
Psychology	8	3.8%
Sociology	7	3.4%
Special Education	8	3.4%
History	6	2.9%
Criminal Justice	6	2.9%
Political Science	5	2.4%
Art	5	2.4%

Alternative Certification. The opinions of teachers with regard to Alternative Certification in special education varied. Sixty-three percent of the teachers responded positively towards Alternative Certification. That is, they indicated a strong preference for the need of Alternative Certification programs. Twenty-five percent responded negatively. That is, they indicated a strong preference for traditional teacher education programs. Three percent offered no opinion.

Teacher Ethnicity and Multicultural Programming. The relationship between teacher ethnicity and multicultural programming in the classroom was examined. Thirty percent of the respondents identified themselves as coming from diverse, cultural backgrounds. However, the amount of time spent in the classroom incorporating multicultural issues varied from Daily (22.1%), Monthly (21.6%), Weekly (26.4%) to Not At All (18.3). Only 22% of the teachers reported that they incorporated multicultural activities in their daily lesson plans. Interestingly, almost an equal number did not address multicultural issues in their curriculum.

Student Data

Student data includes the following topics: Grade level, type of program, caseloads, gender, exceptionality, and ancillary services. Teachers provided the student data for the survey. Teachers reported data on a total of 2,438 students; all responses were not complete. Of those who identified and responded to gender, 1,545 (63 %) were male and 769 (32%) were female.

Grade Level. Thirty-three percent of the students attended elementary school, 25% attended middle school, and 25% attended high school. Six percent of the students attended either preschool, junior high school, or a K-12 school.

Type of Program. Forty-three percent of the students were served in self-contained classrooms. Seventeen percent received services in inclusive/self-contained programs. Twenty-six percent were served in inclusive settings.

Teacher Caseloads. Student caseloads ranged from 1 to 75 students. Seventy-four percent of the teachers maintained caseloads of between 6 to 16 students.

Exceptionalities. A list of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) categories was provided for the survey participants. Respondents provided the number of students who fell under the various categories. Please see Table 4 for data.

Table 4. Student Exceptionality Categories

Disability	No.	%
Learning Disabled	1,814	74%
Mental Retardation	183	8%
Communication Disorders	234	10%
Seriously Emotionally Disturbed	255	10%
Physically Impaired	59	2%
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	32	1%
Visually Impaired	26	1%
Other Health Impaired	95	4%
Traumatic Brain Injury	27	1%
Autistic	28	1%
Gifted/Talented	185	8%
Other	11	.4%

Some students were identified as having more than one disability.

Ancillary Services. The ancillary services provided to the students included Physical Therapy Occupational Therapy, Speech/Language Therapy, Psychological Services, and Social Work. Findings of the study indicated that most students were receiving some type of ancillary service. Some teachers, also reported that their students received multiple ancillary services. See Table 5.

Table 5. Ancillary Services Provided to Students

Ancillary Services	No.	%
Physical Therapy	165	7%
Occupational Therapy	376	15%
Speech/Language Therapy	836	34%
Psychological Therapy	264	11%
Social Work	408	17%

Discussion

This survey investigated the cultural diversity, educational backgrounds, relationships between teacher ethnicity and multicultural programming, and opinions on Alternative Certification.

Data revealed that 70% of teachers surveyed were Anglo. In a state where over 75% of the school age population is culturally diverse (NMSDE, 2001), it is unfortunate that there are so few culturally, diverse professionals or role models in the schools. Contrary to the low representation of culturally, diverse teachers on emergency waiver, 82% did address multicultural issues in the classroom on a regular basis.

The educational backgrounds of the respondents varied and included individuals from Arts and Sciences, Biology, Business, Criminal Justice, Foreign Language, Medicine, Music, and Theatre. This represents approximately 68% of the total respondents. These individuals have a great deal to contribute to the classroom with regard to content knowledge. However, they often lack the knowledge and training in the areas of Special Education law, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process, exceptionalities, accommodations, and information necessary to meet the individual needs of children in special education programs. Interestingly enough, 32% of survey respondents had some degree of teacher training. One might think there is a need for more individuals with teacher training backgrounds to fill vacant teaching positions in special education. That is, they would have a smoother transition into the special education classroom having teaching experience. It is evident that each group has something to offer.

There is a strong push in the state of New Mexico for universities to offer Alternative Certification courses in the field of special education. This is due mainly to the high attrition rate in the field, large number of retirees, number of positions left unfilled, and teacher recruitment from other states. In addition, these issues contribute greatly to the shortage of special education teachers in the state. One objective of this study was to determine the opinions of waivered teachers toward Alternative Certification. Responses indicated that 63% were in favor of Alternative Certification. It was, however, surprising to learn that almost one-third had negative feelings toward Alternative Certification or did not know the meaning of the term.

Based on the data collected, it appears that the waivered teacher is female, Anglo, and in her middle thirties. She has an educational background with an undergraduate degree. She has been working with children with disabilities between one and five years and has been on waiver status for one year. Her caseload is approximately 11 students, two-thirds of which are male. The majority of the children in her classroom has a learning disability and receives speech and language therapy.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it appears that there is a disproportionate ratio among teacher ethnicity. It seems likely that universities need to continue to recruit minority students to enter the field of special education. Further, attention to multicultural issues in the college curriculum might better prepare educators to work with and provide cultural awareness to the population of New Mexico's students.

There seems to be a real interest in Alternative Certification given the great need for teachers and the number of teachers hired on a waiver. As indicated in the study, 32% of the individuals hired on waiver do have educational backgrounds. Given this, an alternative licensure program seems feasible. Finally, waivered teachers whether with or without educational backgrounds have the potential to contribute greatly to classroom.

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BUILDING STUDENT INTERACTION IN ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION THROUGH THE USE OF VOICE CHAT

Introduction

Distance education is a growing field. According to a study published by the US Department of Education in 1999, the number of 4 year public institutions offering distance education courses increased from 62% to 79% from 1995 to 1997; the number of private 4 year institutions offering distance education doubled in the same time frame, from 12% to 22%. These increases do not seem to be slowing. The same study stated that an additional 21% of all institution types surveyed planned on offering distance education within the next three years. Increases in students participating in distance education were also sited with total enrollments in distance education courses increasing from 753,640 in 1995 to 1,632,350 in 1997.

With such dramatic increases in participation in distance education, it is imperative that those involved in the field provide a quality educational experience for distance education students. A recent review of research by Russell (1999) revealed that there is little or no difference between the learning outcomes of distance learners as compared with traditional learners. There are however practices within distance education that provide increased student performance. Most of these practices rely on increased student interaction. Research suggest that interaction in distance education courses produces increased student learning with higher class ratings than those classes with little or no interaction (Hein & Stalcup, 2001; Hodgson, 1999; Irvine, 2000; Marttunen, 1994; Smith, Smith, & Boone, 2000).

Moore (1989) defines learner-instructor (or student-teacher) interaction as interaction between a learner and an expert who has prepared the subject matter. He suggests that learners gain more clarification and content knowledge by interacting with a teacher or peer rather than simply reading the course content. Hodgson (1999) commented on the link between student success and live interactions with student and instructor.

Student-Teacher interaction in distance education takes place through the use of web based tools such as chat. Chat allows for real time conversations to take place over the internet. Real time conversations in chat allows immediate instructor feedback providing the student with a informational clarity (Wang & Newlin, 2001). Chat can also provide the more introverted students a comfortable format for participation (Hodgson, 1999).

Chat can be in either text, video, and/or voice formats. The use of text chat has been sited in many articles (Carpenter, 1998; Hodgson, 1999; Robins& Markland, 1999; Wang & Newlin 2001; Young, 2000). Text chat has been shown to increase student/teacher interactivity (Hodgson, 1999). Text chat can however pose a problem for those students who are poor typists (Rovy & Essex, 2001). Video chat is currently in its infancy and faces many problems including cost (McCormack, 1996) and bandwidth issues (Kerka, 1996). Voice chat is a way to combat the problems of both text and video chat. Unlike text chat, voice chat does not require typing; unlike video chat, some voice chat programs such as Odigo®, and Groove® offer free downloads. Voice chat also alleviates issues of bandwidth. A recent article in Fortune magazine (Gunther, 1999) touted voice chat as the "latest killer app" (p. 348).

Project Description

This project was designed to increase interaction in an introductory special education course. Activities using voice chat are incorporated into the existing lesson structure. Two types of activities are used. A question and answer activity between instructor and student designed to establish clarity over technology concerns, and a

lecture/demonstration designed to give the students an understanding of the instructors teaching style and expectations. The conferencing tool Groove® is used to accomplish these activities

Conferencing Tool

Groove is a web-based conferencing tool. It offers users a variety of applications or tools including:

- Communication tools -- live voice over the Internet, instant messaging, text-based chat, and threaded discussion
- Content sharing tools -- shared files, shared pictures, shared contacts
- Joint activity tools -- co-browsing, Powerpoint presentation walkthroughs, live co-editing of Microsoft Word documents, group calendar

More information on this tool can be found at http://www.groove.net.

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BUILDING UNDERSTANDING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

It is Sunday evening, Mike and I finish a discussion over the phone about the direction we want our Tuesday and Wednesday classes to take. His group of eighth grade social studies students, and my group of eighth/ninth grade language arts students are not down the hall from each other. These classrooms are 600 miles apart. Mike Bates is a first year teacher in Cheyenne Wells, Colorado, while my eighth and ninth graders are at the University of Wyoming Lab School. Mike was a pre-service teacher assigned to my room in his last semester at the University of Wyoming. Now he has his own classroom and students in the small rural community of Cheyenne Wells, Colorado.

In our mentor teacher / pre-service teacher relationship we discussed how to keep in touch with each other after his graduation. That opportunity presented itself late in the semester courtesy of the University of Wyoming School of Extended Study. My university class, EDCI 4400, requires students to utilize computers for many written assignments. The software used by the School of Extended Study allows me to establish password protected chat rooms for real time discussions. With the help of Jeff Miller at the School for Extended Studies Mike and I established one such chat room for our middle school students. This technology allows us to continue to discuss teaching and learning, an element often missing from the professional lives of first year teachers (Eiseman & Thorton, 1999).

The role of the Mentor

At the end of the school year (2000/2001) Mike began the process of saying good-bye. My students were sad to see him go; they felt he should continue to teach at the Lab School. There was a certain amount of anxiety when others in his pre-service class were given contract offers at local job fairs. That anxiety increased when job interviews left him feeling some placements would not be suited to his style. We talked about the need to continue the search until a good fit between school and style was found.

Late in the year that comfortable fit was found; a rural setting, teaching courses he loved, with a staff and administrator who held beliefs similar to his. The tentative agreement was reached and a contract was offered. At that time we resumed discussions about how to continue our mutually beneficial relationship. Our unofficial agreement to continue working together was in fact a mentoring relationship. At the Lab School Mike had been my student teacher, but with the acceptance of his contract he was now a colleague.

At the University of Wyoming Lab School we serve children from pre-K through ninth grade. We are a dual-purpose school, committed to teaching children as well as developing pre-service teachers at the University of

Wyoming. My role as a mentor teacher is a traditional one, working with a pre-service teacher to prepare them for the teaching field. The duties of a mentor teacher include planning with pre-service teachers, allowing them to teach the class, observing them and conferencing with them about their performance (Gratch, 1988). The mentor teacher/pre-service teacher role changed with Mike's acceptance of a teaching position. He is now a colleague, with his own classroom and his own teaching agenda. The mentoring relationship does not necessarily require that cooperating teachers be in the same building. Communication and the mentoring process maybe carried out over great distances with today's technology. The goal of the mentoring relationship is to help novice teachers to critically reflect on teaching practices by asking questions and seeking advice (Bullough, 1990; Crowe, 1995; & Gratch, 1998).

The ability to communicate instantly makes it possible to mentor over great distances. Technology is changing our lives and that includes how we teach (Elkind, 2000/2001). Tele mentoring allows a relationship over distance that still offers support and an opportunity to reflect (Eisenman, 1999 & Stephenson, 1997/98). At the lab school as a pre-service teacher Mike was given complete control of classes gradually. As he became more comfortable with the students his responsibilities for teaching were increased. One area of growth for Mike was the ability to take over the teaching responsibilities in my classes. Mike identifies this trust in his ability as a key element in his pre-service teaching success. The ability of a mentor teacher and pre-service teacher to form a relationship that carries over into a teacher's first year of work is a positive growth element. A key in the professional development of a first year teacher is their ability to reflect on curriculum and teaching issues with a trusted colleague (Gratch, 1998).

Classroom Teacher as Researcher

Beyond my role as classroom teacher I became an overt observer, conducting research openly in the classroom. Gathering data on a normally occurring function in the class, namely the use of real time computer communication over distance to build a relationship between two groups of students, made me at once both teacher and researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The process of gathering data in my own classroom requires that I reflect on my own bias throughout this project. My work with Mike, first as a mentor teacher, and now as a colleague, influences my feelings about the data I am gathering (LeCompte, 1987). My subjectivity is impacted by my pedagogical beliefs that I share with Mike about the business of teaching. In addition the rural setting of our schools has created a strong sense of community at both sites. This rural educational community means that students spend a great deal of time together, creating a high degree of cultural mingling. I am also influenced by my relationship with Mike as a person. Beyond our relationship as colleagues there is a very real human relationship, I want Mike to do well. These areas of concern are a part of me, I bring them into the classroom and they cannot be separated from who I am as a teacher (Peshkin, 1988).

In order to address these issues of bias within the project I have attempted to strengthen the validity of the research by the evaluation of others both within and outside the educational community where the project is taking place. Data triangulation and investigator triangulation is employed in an effort to reduce the impact of bias in the study (Mathison, 1988). As colleagues raised questions about the importance of our project I turned to critical friends within the staff at school to check on the perceived value of our project. In both cases these individuals saw value in the project. These educators saw a value to letting adolescents form relationships beyond their immediate peer groups. To further protect the internal validity of this research we evaluated each step of our project with a suggested field research guide outlining research organization and questions relative to the project (Hemmeter, Doyle, Collins, & Ault 1996).

It is not possible to completely remove bias from my point of view as Peshkin points out. It is the garment I wear. My responsibility as an educational researcher is to make this study available and let other educators decide for themselves if the information is of value to them (Willinskey, 2001). As a practicing classroom teacher the strongest argument I can make for the reliability and validity of my research is that I am willing to make it a part of my curriculum. The fact that the administrators of our school are willing to allow us to use class time to pursue this project serves as an endorsement of our research. If the project did not have instructional value we would not use our teaching time to continue the research. Our administrators would not condone the use of instructional time unless they also perceived a value to the research.

Setting up the link

The creation of this project involves a human element as well as a technological element. The process of setting up the technological portion of the project, a real time chat room, for students to communicate over great distances is relatively simple. Most classrooms, or computer labs, have the hardware (the computers) to accomplish this task. In our world of restricted budgets and limited funds this is a definite advantage. The software, or programs to run such a project, is another matter. The software to administer chat rooms is available in many forms for a wide range of costs. Hotmail and Microsoft Network are offered free of charge to Internet users, while America on Line charges a fee for the services it provides. In the case of America on Line, teachers or schools who are members can create a restricted chat room from computers in their classroom or in the computer lab.

The use of a restricted chat room, a computer chat between selected parties, is important because minors are involved. It was important to assure our respective administrators that our chat room was restricted to only our classes. Our project, linking the Lab School and Cheyenne Wells Middle School, utilizes e-companion, a software package provided by the School of Extended Studies at the University of Wyoming to create the chat room. This technology, while expensive, was available because of a teaching agreement with the School of Extended Study at the University of Wyoming. One advantage of this software package is the ability to create a restricted access chat room, thereby ensuring the privacy of our two classrooms. A secondary advantage of the software package is the ability to generate a printout of the entire chat on each date.

The human element of the communication project is in truth the most crucial part of this project. The technology to create chat rooms for participants separated by great distances exist in most classrooms and computer labs already. The development of a shared project between two classrooms and teachers requires communication, co-planning, and similar philosophical beliefs about education. Mike and I were able to discuss the organization of this project over time, during the culmination of his student teaching time and the initial days of the new school year. Our co-planning for the project took place as we became familiar with our new classes and schedules at school. Our similar philosophical beliefs about education facilitated our partnership in this project. This project, from its inception to the actual implementation of the chat room, took several months of work before students could take part in their first organized chat.

We used email, phone conversations, and then practiced a chat room to test the procedure and plan the initial contact between our two classes. During this time we discussed how the flow of the chat would be organized. We initiated discussions with our students to determine the elements the students identified as important. As we implemented the project Mike and I continued discussing our joint observations and new directions for ensuing chats. Our continued discussions are designed to foster research site cooperation, and build the relationships between our classrooms. These elements serve to strengthen the internal validity of the research project (Hemmeter, Doyle, Collins & Ault, 1996).

The Well-Intentioned Mistake

With any research project things happen that are unplanned. These well-intentioned mistakes generally serve to surprise the researchers. How the mistakes are dealt with may turn a potentially damaging situation into one that helps build on the body of research. I believe this was the case with the two well-intentioned mistakes that stand out during the initial phase of this project. Both mistakes grew out of assumptions made about inquiry methods.

The first well-intentioned mistake deals with the technology used in this research project. In this age of instant communication it is assumed that computer technology will not fail. When we experienced difficulty with the software and could not establish contact during one week the students experienced serious disappointment. The students had come to expect the weekly chats with the other class and when this did not happen they were upset. Mike and I sensed this unrest and it had an impact on us. The value of this well-intentioned mistake on us was an increased self-awareness. We were made aware of the importance of our research on the participants in the study. The students in our classes have come to value their time communicating with peers they have not met face to face.

The second well-intentioned mistake involves colleagues in the work place. As this project was developed I made an assumption that everyone on staff would recognize the value of this project. This project developed a communication link with middle school students over great distances thereby addressing state standards in social studies, health and wellness, and language arts. Not all colleagues shared my enthusiasm for this project. A

colleague became upset that students were pulled out of math class to chat with students in Cheyenne Wells. Prior to one chat two students were not allowed to leave math class to participate. A conversation ensued voicing the question "How long do you plan to hold these chat rooms with the class in Colorado?" The students were not caught up with their work and the teacher would not let them leave the room. I explained that I agreed with that stand and supported it. The colleague felt that in this case it made them the difficult person because the students were not allowed to participate in the chat. I was bothered by this attitude because I felt it was so out of place at our school where project based learning is a focal point.

This attitude challenged my long-held assumptions about teachers at my school. The incident moved me to seek advice from people not directly involved in the project, or with teaching students, to determine if these colleagues perceived a value to our research. This well-intentioned mistake required me to look at assumptions I have made about teaching and the importance of communication. One must not make assumptions about shared teaching philosophy without careful discussion.

Conclusion

This project creates a communication link between rural middle school students separated by distance. In the process, the project addresses numerous state and national standards in social studies, language arts, and health and wellness. The project utilizes existing computers and readily available software making it fiscally attractive. The cooperation of classroom teachers, and local administrators is the most difficult facet of this project requiring communication, co-planning and common philosophies about education. There is a value to this type of project because students become involved and share their teachers' enthusiasm. Disappointment can occur when the technology used fails and the communication link cannot be maintained. It is also vital for colleagues to appreciate the value of the research. The successful completion of the initial phase of this research sets the stage for the next set of inquiry questions dealing with the application of this communication link to additional content areas.

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COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF DISTANCE AND ON CAMPUS EDUCATION: IS THE DECK STACKED?

INTRODUCTION

As more and more college content is provided via on-line and distance education courses, it is necessary to assess the efficacy of the courses delivered using these new media. Do distance learning courses prepare teachers adequately? Are teachers prepared as well as those taking on campus classes, or perhaps even better prepared? Before we can answer these questions we need to know the following: who is being served? and are the populations comparable? Various measures can be used to evaluate the teachers who emerge from each type of program. Yet, are these measures even valid if the populations are significantly different? The students are not randomly assigned, as one would do in a statistical study, but self-select their placement. What factors in this self-selection could effect a comparative evaluation? Is on-campus training preferable and does it produce teachers of a higher caliber? Are distance education students more highly motivated?

While not claiming to answer each of the preceding questions, this study attempts to explore some of the possible differences between these populations. While limited to a survey of students in the Utah State University Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation, the results may suggest likely avenues for other researchers to explore before developing a comparative evaluation of distance education programs.

METHODS

Subjects

Surveys were administered to students enrolled in the Utah State University Special Education undergraduate program during Fall Semester 2001, as well as last year's distance education cohort. All distance education students were sent eMail requests to log onto a web-based survey page. In order to maximize returns, those students who had difficulty using the webpage or failed to complete the survey were sent a follow-up e-mail with the survey attached or imbedded. Twenty-eight distance education student responses were compiled. On campus, hard copies were printed and distributed to students enrolled in a comparable class. The printed surveys were identical in appearance to the web-based surveys. Thirty-nine surveys were returned and compiled from that group.

These students represented the current cohort of on-campus and this and last year's distance education populations. Since virtually all Special Education undergraduates take these classes either on campus or by distance education, it's students would present a snapshot of the total enrollment.

Setting

The common setting for this study is the Special Education undergraduate program at Utah State University. Utah State is located in Logan, a small city in the northern part of the state which draws 90% of its students from the surrounding area of small cities and rural communities. This setting is split, however, by the manner of students' course delivery medium. Some students are taking classes in a traditional campus class setting and the others are located well off campus around the state. The question, therefore, is not in what ways these settings differ, but how the student populations differ.

Survey Content

The questions on the survey were selected to highlight differences between the on campus and distant student populations. The researchers wanted to know if the populations differed in age and by how much; are there

differences in gender balance, marital status and number of children at home; and other pertinent factors. The questions were posed primarily in multiple choice format, such as "Are you ( ) married or ( ) single?" These questions were supplemented with a few very short answer queries: e.g. "What is your age?" Individual responses were transferred directly to a spreadsheet and either per cents or averages were computed. Little ambiguity or confusion resulted from the format, yet there was some of each. For example, students were asked for both their zip code and whether they lived in an urban, suburban, or rural setting. Approximately three-quarters of the on campus students listed their zip code as the zip code for Logan, a city of about 35,000 located 54 miles from the nearest larger city. None of these students indicated that they lived in an urban area, all but one choosing the suburban label instead. When asked how many hours they worked, if they were employed, several students indicated a range of hours, which is typical for part-time workers. The researchers chose to use the lower end of the range in coding the response, thus indicating a minimum number of hours worked weekly.

Students were also asked for comments. Only eight wrote comments and they were not particularly germane to the study, thus they have been omitted.

Survey Procedure

With the intent of determining to what extent the populations of on-campus and distance education students were similar or different, the researchers discussed numerous questions that could have been included on a survey of this kind. Constraints on the length of a successful survey and the ability to compare results with other surveys narrowed both the number and the breadth of the questions. The remaining questions were formatted as a webpage. When completed by the respondents, the results were e-mailed automatically to the researcher. Distant students were requested by e-mail to complete the web survey which was directly linked from the e-mail itself. Some students indicated problems with this technology, so a second survey was e-mailed directly to the class. Although respondents were assured of their anonymity, many gave their names on the survey. This was a fortunate choice, as some respondents attempted the web survey two or three times and unknowingly succeeded. Their extra responses were noted and not counted.

For the on-campus class, the webpage survey was printed and handed out in class with very few changes (such as eliminating the line with a "button" to send the response). Students marked their responses and returned the surveys to the instructor who delivered them to the researcher. The completed surveys were numbered and then the individually identifying information severed from the rest of the form. Data was entered into a spreadsheet by the researcher and a student assistant, then the entries were recounted for an error check. Percentages or averages were calculated and are indicated in the tables.

Results

Seventy-six distance education students were requested to complete the survey: with 28 returns or 37%. On-campus 39 of 43 surveys were collected for a rate of 91%. Most of the requested information was complete, but there were a few responses with some areas left blank. This might have been due to response areas being formatted in two columns and the second column being overlooked. Where information was missing, calculations were made only on the information received.

The most notable difference between the populations are in the areas of age and family composition. Average age on-campus was 22 years with a mode of 21 (17 of 38 respondents) and a range from 20 to 51. Off campus the mean was 43 with negligible mode (3 respondents were 31) and a range from 23 to 52. Twenty-four percent of the campus students were married, and only 2 of them had children, while 89% of the dist. ed. students were married, three-quarters of whom have children.

Table 1

	Age	Married	Children
On-campus	average: 22 yrs mode: 21 yrs range: 20-51	24%	average: 0.1 mode: 0 range: 0-3
Distance Ed.	average: 43yrs mode: 31 yrs range: 23-52	89%	average: 2 mode: 2 range: 0-6

More than three-quarters of students worked, but most on-campus students were employed part-time (16 hours/week on average) and many distance ed. students were employed full-time (36 hours/week on average). Distance ed. students were primarily employed in the public schools: 32% as special education teachers, 18% as educational paraprofessionals, 10% as "other, education", and 7% regular education teachers.

Table 2

	Working	Hours/Week	Primary Type of Job
On-campus	74%	Average: 16	59% not in education
Distance Ed.	86%	Average: 36	67% education

The last area of marked difference between on-campus students and distance education students is current level of education. As one might expect from their youth, on-campus students have had less opportunity for higher degrees: Ninety-two percent have either a high school diploma (46%) or associate's degree (46%). Much like their diverse ages, distance education students are more varied in their previous education:

Table 3

21% High School	32% Associate's	32% Bachelor's	7% Master's

Some questions revealed modest differences, with questionable significance. One hundred percent of the on-campus students and 86% of distance ed. students in this snapshot were female. Seventy-four percent on-campus and 86% off campus students were working while going to school.

Several of the areas examined by the survey showed little if any significant differences between the two student populations. Eleven percent of distance education students said they had a disability to the 8% on-campus. Reflecting the lack of ethnic diversity in Utah, 93% of distance education and 100% of on-campus students reported being Caucasian. The lone non-white student only claimed to be "other." Though there was considerable difference in highest degree obtained, grade point average for each group was virtually the same (3.43 dist. ed. vs. 3.46 on-campus).

DISCUSSION

Conclusions

As the technology used for distance education as evolved, so has the technology to evaluate it. Of the several ways to assess distance learning, many compare data against that of traditional on-campus courses. In several aspects, we found that the student populations in each educational setting are similar, yet there are some distinct and serious dissimilarities with profound implications for both instruction and evaluation.

Implications

Holding populations the same, as the following researchers have tried to do, validates comparison. The differences in student populations that we found shows a crucial need for future researchers to be wary of the problems in making comparison studies. In 1995 Bruce Thyer used an attitudinal survey to compare his on-campus and distance education classes and found no difference. However, are attitudinal surveys - course satisfaction for example - comparable when one population may consists of mostly 21 year olds, and the other a spectrum averaging twice as old? Thyer recommended "well crafted comparison studies that examine not simply student attitudes ..., but actual knowledge and skills." (Thyer, 1995)

In an attempt to look at actual learning, evaluators of the Oklahoma Televised Instruction System compared students' grades. These researchers found that contrary to the prevailing wisdom at the time, "distance students are not adversely affected relative to course performance... In fact the reverse may be true." (Dillon & Gunawardena, 1995) Grades may be a useful cross discipline measure, but one must be cautious as grades are somewhat subjective. Instructors often make accommodations, and do we know if groups are, in fact, treated similarly. Should one use the same outcome measures with mostly high school graduates as with a mix of high school, associate's, bachelor's and master's degree holders?

In 1999, Rodriques evaluated for quality of content face-to-face discussions with participants in on-online forums. She found that online, "student's comments were richer, fuller and more reflective because they had opportunities to deliberate, phrase and actively construct their responses." (Rodriques, 1999) Could comparing the depth and quality of discussion among older students who are working and raising families to that of single young adults successfully yield information about the instructional medium?

This study we undertook was limited to one department of one college at one university. However, the question of population differences applies to any distance education comparison, as well as to course development, improvement, and selection.

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COMPUTER ILLITERACY: IMPLICATIONS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

During the industrial age, most people in our educational system learned basic skills, which prepared them for the era in which they lived. Today those who do not learn computer skills, will not be prepared for the era in which they live, the age of information. Illiteracy in the classic sense will continue to be a problem, but a new form of illiteracy – computer illiteracy will increase, since those with low attainment in the traditional sense, as well as those who are unwilling to learn computer skills, will find themselves on the wrong side of the digital divide (International Futures Programme, 1999).

Computer technology has been growing both nationally and internationally since the 1980s. Although businesses and other organizations have made enormous strides as a result of better technologies, our educational system continues to be resistant to change (Bennett, 1999). Educators have been encouraged, pushed, pulled, and sometimes even dragged into the era of technology. But despite the numerous advantages of distance education, especially to rural areas, some educators and those they teach continue to resist the acquisition of the technical skills required to take advantage of it.

The very name, distance education, suggests that this form of service delivery for educational programs is a perfect solution toward equity in education for rural areas. After all, among other advantages, it is a way to provide opportunities for educators in rural areas to access a broad range of curriculum materials, to participate in training and professional development opportunities, to communicate and consult with professionals outside of their district, and to provide additional support to students and their families. So why would an educator in a rural area not welcome distance education and the technology required to support it?

The lack of community support, or its ambivalence toward the implementation of technology, can often be enough to put it on the back burner behind other more basic needs of a school district. Computer illiteracy, as well as basic literacy, is certainly not unique to rural areas, but rural areas tend to have more than their share of problems. Computer illiteracy may not be at the top of their priority list. Despite the many advantages of living in rural areas and the reason many urbanites still hold onto the bucolic dream of "country living", there are also disadvantages. These disadvantages become apparent in the area of education. According to the National Adult Literacy Survey, while rural residents made up only 28% of the United States population in 1993, they accounted for 42% of the functionally illiterate. Rural states in the Midwest and Northeast were reported to have a disproportionate number of older residents, as rural and farm populations were reported to have a greater proportion of persons with disabilities (Byers, 1993). And although the poverty rate in rural America declined somewhat in the 1990's, the urban-rural gap has remained constant since 1991 (Huang, 1999). Communities which may be comprised of residents who are poor, undereducated, and of a generation which did not grow up with technology, do not necessarily welcome technological innovations, particularly if they are not convinced of their value, and especially if they are expensive.

Technology may be considered cost effective by many, but it is not inexpensive to implement. Many rural schools do not even have the infrastructure in place to support computers. Some school buildings lack the conduits for computer-related cables, and the electrical wiring for computers and other communication technologies (Dewees, 1999). Many school administrators, usually those with little knowledge of the value of technology in the delivery of educational opportunities, are often reluctant to realign their already over stressed budgets to accommodate the cost of technology required to support distance education. (Hardin and Ziebarth, 2001)

But despite fiscal concerns and lack of community interest, even school districts, both rural and urban, which for the last two decades have been reluctant to incorporate technology into their educational programs, can no longer ignore the need for distance education as a conduit for continuing educating and support for their current teachers, a tool for preparing new teachers, which they so desperately need, and a tool for providing their students with the best possible educational experience. As more and more rural areas are linked to the telecommunication infrastructure, instructors, administrators and learners will have to be trained to use technology, but there is a difference between reluctantly accepting something you can no longer avoid and fully embracing it. You can lead a horse to water, and you may even get him to drink, but if you can get him to roll over on his back and float, well then you've really done something! Like it or not, a revolution in education is taking place and it is irreversible. As educators, we have a responsibility to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Although we may have no control over the financial requirements of school districts to update their infrastructure to accommodate modern technologies, this need is fully recognized, and in many cases is being accommodated by additional state and federal funding. The infrastructure is essential, but does not, in and of itself guarantee success in the delivery of distance education programs, if those who are to use it do not know how, and aren't willing to learn. We can insist that learners have no choice but to use technology, and we can even blame them when they don't know how, but if we really want distance education to succeed, we must address the needs of the learner as well as those of the administrators and instructors.

Although much has been written about distance education delivery, support technology, and faculty skills, there is a much smaller body of literature that addresses the needs of the learner. One such study was conducted by Drs. Benjamin Lignugaris/Kraft and Ronda Menlove, Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation, Utah State University, entitled, *Initiating the Uninitiated.* In this study, Lignugaris/Kraft and Menlove, site a study by, (Biner, et al., 1994), which argues that high levels of learner satisfaction are important because they may contribute to lower program attrition and how much students learn within a distance education program.

The purpose of the inquiry by Lignugaris/Kraft and Menlove was to examine the effect of three different types of technology support services for students in a distance education class on the student ratings of their information accessing skills. The support services offered were: 1) a precourse technology workshop, 2) help files provided on a course website, and 3) and access to a technology assistant. Students, in the study, completed a survey of their skills prior to the precourse technology workshop and at the end of a semester-long course. Using a correlated t-test, student's initial ratings were compared to their post course ratings on critical software skills, computer operations, and on software skills that were addressed in the precourse workshop or the semester course. The students in this study rated their skills higher at the end of the course on the software skills and computer operations addressed in the workshop. In contrast, there was no statistical difference observed in student ratings on the software skills that were not addressed in the workshop or practiced in the course (Lignugaris/Kraft, B., & Menlove, R. (Submitted).

This study substantiates the importance of developing student confidence in their technology skills prior to participating in electronic distance education. And if the argument of (Biner, et. al., 1994) is correct, that learner satisfaction is important, the findings of this study also indicate that supports in the form of pre-course technology workshops, help files on course, and access to a technology assistant, can help reduce attrition rates in distance education courses and the amount of knowledge learned by students.

The importance of studies like the one conducted by Lignugaris/Kraft and Menlove cannot be underestimated in the field of distance education. Just as the charge of the educational community has changed from teaching the basics to students in the industrial age to teaching the technological skills our society needs to thrive in the information age, so has the demographics of those we teach. The major drive of the knowledge economy in the future will be a growing requirement for lifelong learning, which includes older students. We can

no longer just replace our untrained workers with a younger workforce. Especially in the field of education, where the demand for qualified teachers is at a critical stage, many of our learners will be non-traditional, such as those starting a second career, or those who have been working as para-professionals in the educational system. These are students who have different needs and requirements. These are students for which the flexibility and convenience of distance education is ideal. But they may also be students who did not grow up with computers, or think they are computer literate because they have experience using word processing programs, but when faced with the requirements to download class materials, access web sites, add attachments to E-mail, etc., may feel somewhat less than capable (International Futures Programme, 1999). Those who are computer gurus often have the tendency to treat those who are "technologically challenged" with disdain, which we cannot afford to do, if we want these same people to be our educational consumers. We cannot fault them for not knowing what they have not been taught.

Distance educators in universities and other established organization have an advantage in providing the educational services that will be required by our society in the future; they have a head start. But the competition in the field of distance education is going to be fierce. If we fail to meet the needs of our students by not instituting training programs to teach them the computer skills they will need to be successful, and in a manner in which they feel comfortable, and if we fail to provide adequate support services and technical assistance to our students, then the necessary systems and services they require, may well come from new forms of providers, e.g. multimedia firms, training experts, etc. (International Futures Programme, 1999).

Table 1: Software Skill and Computer Operation Ratings

Software Skill		
Skill	**Pre –Workshop Mean (SD)**	**End Semester Mean (SD)**
Word Processing	3.77 (0.73)	4.17 (0.80)*
E-mail	3.70 (1.05)	4.24 (0.79)*
Internet Browsers	3.60 (1.07)	4.03 (0.90)*
Acrobat Reader	1.83 (1.05)	3.39 (0.99)*
Computer Operation		
Downloading from the Internet	2.23 (1.01)	3.21 (1.14)*
Installing Software and Plug-ins	2.07 (1.01)	2.59 (1.11)*
Attaching documents to e-mail	2.17 (1.12)	3.86 (0.99)*
Organizing files/folders on your computer	2.67 (1.09)	3.52 (0.98)*
Navigating Webpages	3.33 (1.27)	3.86 (0.92)*
Reading academic text on your computer screen	2.90 (1.12)	3.48 (1.18)*
Taking notes and annotating readings on your computer screen	1.67 (1.06)	2.38 (1.05)*
Skills Not Addressed		
Spreadsheets	2.23 (0.93)	2.39 (0.80)
Multimedia Software	2.23 (1.25)	2.66 (1.20)
Instant Messaging	1.79 (1.27)	1.65 (1.01)

Correlated t-test – $p \leq 0.05$

Table 2: Accessing Information on the Class Website

	End Semester Mean (SD)
Accessing the on-line syllabus was easy.	4.59 (0.87)
The on-line syllabus was easy to navigate	4.62 (0.87)
It was easy to access my grades through the on-line syllabus	4.54 (0.93)
Course readings were easy to download	3.93(1.39)
Internet readings were easy to download	3.96(1.50)

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MEASURING TEACHER BEHAVIORS IN DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES

An increasing number of institutions of higher education are beginning to deliver coursework through distance education technology. There are a number of delivery options, including those that are synchronous and asynchronous and those that provide one-way and two-way communication options (Spooner, Spooner, Algozzine, & Jordan, 1998). Interactive video is a method that allows for synchronous delivery with two-way interaction using a telephone cable network and television monitors. This mode decreases the obstacle of distance by allowing the instructor and students at various sites to both see and hear each other as they interact in real time during class sessions.

While interactive video has obvious advantages, it also presents challenges in its effective use. In addition to high installation and maintenance costs and occasional technological failures, instruction through an interactive video system places a number of constraints on instructors. For example, instructors may be required to operate equipment (i.e., elmo) while teaching within a confined space. Instructors need to monitor movements since the video received at distant sites sometimes may have a "jerky" quality. In addition, instructors have to monitor pace, since there may be a small delay in the auditory delivery. When there are multiple distant sites, the instructor only will be able to view one site at a time and listen to student responses from one site at a time; thus, instructors need refined techniques for scanning and questioning.

Experienced distance education instructors have reported various techniques to improve delivery using interactive video (Collins & Grisham-Brown, 2001), and a few have reported efforts to train instructors who are new to distance education in these techniques prior to delivering their first course (Baird, 1995; Parisot & Waring, 1994). However, many instructors learn distance education techniques through trial and error, and many courses may be then be delivered in a low quality or ineffective manner.

A goal of distance education should be to provide distance education students with the same quality of instruction that they would receive as an on-campus student in a traditional course (Collins, Hemmeter, Schuster, & Stevens, 1996). To do this, instructors need to become aware of recommended strategies for distance education delivery and to become fluent in the use of those strategies. The purpose of this paper is to describe a process used at the University of Kentucky for measuring the effectiveness of instruction in distance learning courses. In addition, a pilot student conducted there that used that instrumentation will be described. Finally future directions for research in this area will be discussed.

Development Process

In order to develop the instructor effectiveness instrument, we initially reviewed the literature to determine recommended teacher behaviors for providing instruction in distance education courses. Since distance education technologies have been used across a wide variety of professions, the literature review encompassed areas other than just education (e.g., medicine, business, etc.). Based on that information, the following general categories of instruction were identified: (a) plans and designs instruction; (b) demonstrates knowledge of content; (c) creates learning climate; and (d) assesses and provides feedback. Within each of these broad categories were discrete teaching behaviors that one would expect to observe at some point throughout a distance education class. These teaching behaviors were those that the observer marked as either present or absent throughout the entire class period. For example, under *plans and designs instruction*, we looked for graphics that were easily viewed by distance education sites (e.g., clear font, 24-36 font, horizontal). In *demonstrates knowledge of content*, we determined

whether instructors clearly presented material and related coursework to real life experiences. With regard to *creates learning climate,* we determined if the instructor gave opportunities for students to work in small groups, and used techniques to keep students on track. Finally, we determined if instructors *assessed and provided feedback* by giving in-class quizzes and allowing opportunities for self-assessment.

As well as these broad categories and discrete teaching behaviors, we developed an interval recording data sheet to evaluate specific behaviors for *implementing and managing instruction*. These were instructor behaviors we would expect to see occur numerous times throughout the class period. Some of these teacher behaviors included addressing on and off-campus students by name or site, providing regional examples, and making eye contact with on and off-campus students. These were measured during a 3 min interval using a partial interval system. The recorder watched the teacher for an entire 3 min interval and recorded if the behavior occurred at any point during the interval.

Pilot Study

The specific research question addressed in this study was: Will the teaching behaviors of faculty improve following training and feedback in effective distance learning teaching strategies? During spring semester 2001, a study was conducted to assess the effects of an intervention package designed to improve distance learning instructor behaviors. Four faculty who were teaching distance learning courses responded to an invitation by the Associate Dean of Distance Learning Programs to participate in the study. They represented four disciplines: Rehabilitation Counseling; Early Childhood Education; Library Science; and Mechanical Engineering. Baseline data were collected on each faculty member's teaching behaviors prior to intervention. Following three (3) sessions of baseline data, the investigator's identified specific teaching behaviors to "target" for each faculty member. (These were identified from the coding sheet that listed discrete behaviors evidenced during observation sessions.) A professional development plan was developed that identified those "target" behaviors and provided specific suggestions of how faculty might improve that behavior. For example, if the faculty member was having difficulty actively involving students at off-campus sites, the professional developmental plan provided sample activities for increasing involvement. The investigators met with the faculty to discuss their professional development plans and gave feedback based on the baseline data. In addition, faculty members were given resource materials to assist them in teaching distance learning courses. The materials consisted of definitions of teacher behaviors and in-class activities that have been shown to facilitate student engagement in on-campus courses. In addition, the investigators gave the faculty articles on teaching distance learning courses. Following this feedback session, data were collected until the end of the semester.

A graduate student collected the baseline and intervention data by using the coding sheet developed by the investigators. Each class was videotaped and data collected from the videotapes. Reliability data were collected during 20% of all class meetings. Reliability data never fell below 80%.

The results from the study are presented in table 1. In the first column is the mean percentage of times the instructor engaged in the teaching behavior prior to intervention. In the second column is the mean percentage of times the instructor engaged in the teaching behavior following the intervention. Instructor A improved in two (2) of four (4) areas following the intervention. Instructor B improved in the only area identified for intervention. Instructor C improved in four (4) of six (6) areas. Instructor D improved in two (2) of seven (7) areas. We speculate that the lack of improvement in some areas resulted from an intervention that was not strong enough to result in change. In addition, some behaviors identified for intervention were combined with other behaviors. As a result, when data were calculated, it appears that the instructor was performing the behavior 100% of the time prior to intervention, when that was not the case.

Table 1.

Percent of Instructor Behaviors Observed During Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention Sessions

Instructor A:		
• Uses a variety of materials to enhance participation	100%	100%
• Provides opportunities opportunity for students to ask questions and receive content	25%	33%
• Allows opportunity for student self-assessment	33%	0%
Instructor B:		
• Uses graphic material appropriate to technology	25%	33%
Instructor C:		
• States objectives in previewing content for the class session	20%	100%
• Uses graphic material appropriate to technology	75%	75%
• Conducts final review or summary	0%	0%
• Establishes and reminds students of rules	0%	100%
• Uses technology proficiently	80%	100%
• Allows opportunity for student self-assessment	0%	25%
Instructor D:		
• States objectives for previewing content for class session	40%	25%
• Uses graphic material appropriate to technology	100%	100%
• Conducts final review or summary	0%	50%
• Provides opportunity for students to ask questions and receive content	0%	0%
• Establishes and reminds students of rules		
• Uses technology proficiently	0%	50%
• Allows opportunity for student self-assessment	100%	25%
	0%	0%

Future Research

This project adds to research on distance learning in three ways. First, there remains scant literature on teaching practices in distance learning courses. Faculty who teach distance learning courses are eager to receive feedback and assistance when teaching distance learning formats. Second, there is the potential that studies such as these could be used in doctoral programs for training future faculty. There is an expectation that new faculty have experience teaching courses in a variety of distance learning formats, yet there are few opportunities for doctoral level students to learn the necessary skills to do so. Finally, interventions such as the one described in this paper could be useful as professional development tools to faculty who are currently teaching and have been asked or are required to teach distance learning courses.

Future research should focus on a more continuous form of feedback, rather than the "one-time" feedback we used in our study. If experienced faculty members are not available to provide feedback, a self monitoring system should be investigated. The coding sheet described in this article could, with some modification, be used as a self-monitoring guide. Faculty also should be interested in the extent to which their teaching behaviors impact student attending and performance in distance learning classes. Since most universities are interested in ensuring coursework integrity at remote sites, it is worthwhile to investigate this issue. Differences between attending and performance of students who are receiving the class on-site and those at remote sites should be investigated.

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USING A WEB-BASED TUTORIAL TO TEACH THE IEP PROCESS

Learning to teach is an evolutionary process that takes time to unfold. Add to that the complexity of learning the laws and regulations for special education, and you have an ambitious task indeed. I currently teach a course within the special education sequence in our teacher education program in which students learn the basics of both case management/service coordination and the fundamentals of teaching elementary-aged children who have mild to moderate disabilities. While students will go on to take additional courses that will refine and reinforce these areas, I need to build a good foundation for their future learning.

For several semesters I had been dissatisfied with how the course progressed. If I spent ample time reviewing policies, forms, and the format for developing the IEP, I did not have enough time to discuss how to make relevant instructional decisions about students. If I hurried through policies and IEP development, students were at a loss in terms of the format and vocabulary needed to complete assignments that called for them to write goals, objectives, and placement justifications. I reviewed published texts and CD format materials that described IEP development for possible use in my course. While these provided excellent information, they did not meet two of my specific goals for the course: (1) familiarity with the Nevada state-adopted IEP form that is used in all districts, and (2) the importance of tying IEP goals and objectives to Nevada curriculum standards.

During the summer of 2001, I decided to develop a web site through which students could learn about the IEP process and practice the development of specific components of the IEP. The web site that resulted, ***The IEP Tutorial: How to Write Effective Individualized Educational Programs for Students with Disabilities***, has gone a long way in addressing the needs of my students and my goals for the course. This paper will describe the development and format of the tutorial and present preliminary results about the effectiveness of the tutorial during its first semester of use.

Development of the Tutorial

During my initial thinking about the site, I listed the information and skills I wanted the students to learn, based on many of the activities I had done during class sessions. These included the following:

- Review the process by which children are made eligible for special education, from initial concern through placement
- Explain of each part of the IEP, using the Nevada state-adopted forms
- Learn the formats for writing goals, objectives, and justification statements
- Critiquing and fine-tune goals and objectives that are not well written
- Develop IEPs for children described in case studies

I found it helpful to sketch the site as a hierarchy of boxes and connecting lines in order to think through the relationship of the sections and the number and types of pages that would be needed. While this sketch aided me in the initial stages of development, I found the entire process was much more complex than my initial imaginings.

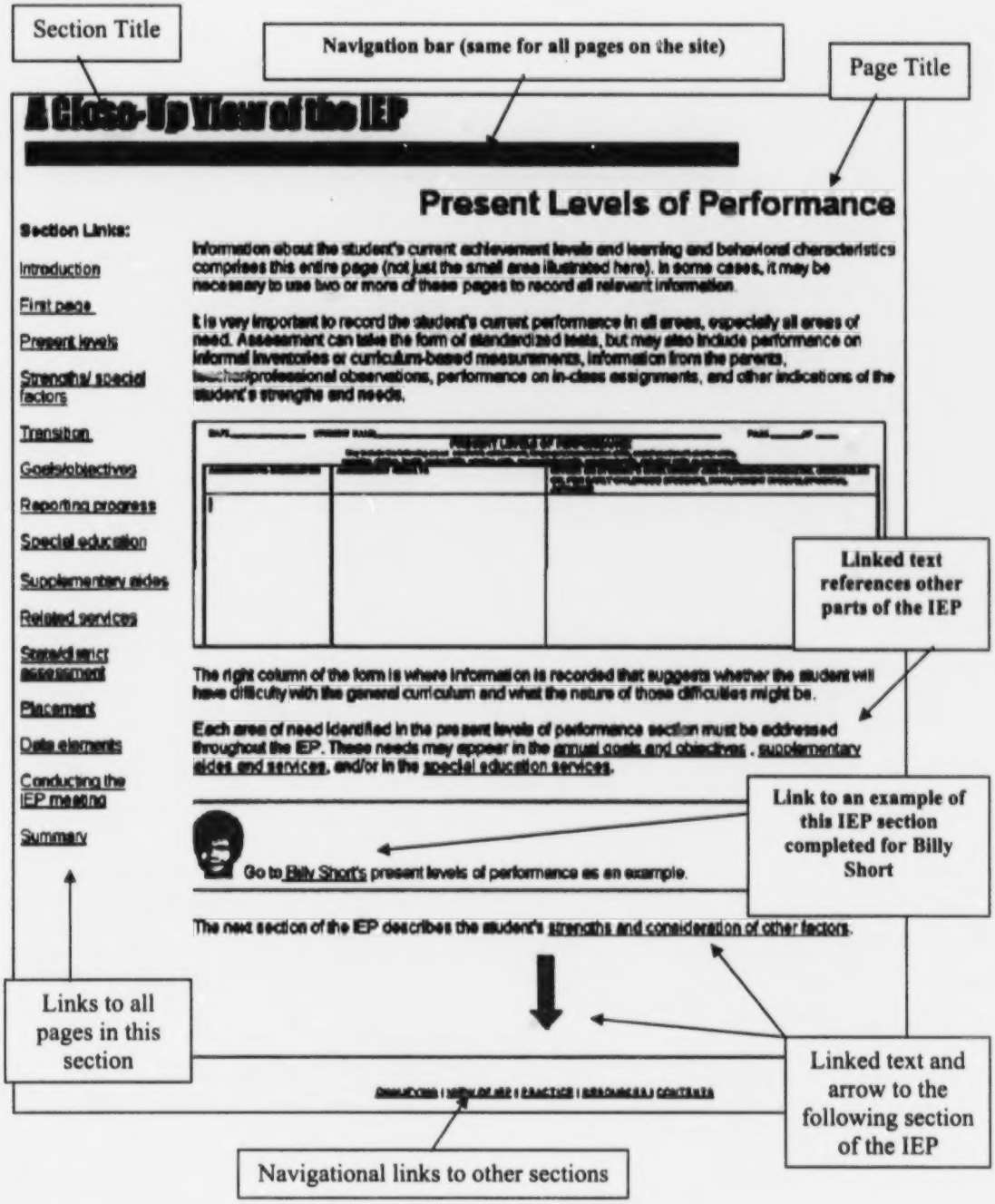
I used Adobe GoLive 5.0 (Adobe Systems, 2000) to develop the site because of its capabilities for total site management and up-dating. I learned the system as I went and experienced many false starts and mistakes. I attempted to structure the activities on the web site in an interactive fashion, similar to many of the in-class exercises I had developed for my course—but seldom had time to fully use. As a result, the site has four major sections:

1. **Qualifying for Special Education** – This section explains the process by which students qualify for special education. It includes sections on the referral for evaluation, the procedures for identification, and how special education services are determined. This explanation puts the IEP in the larger context of how special education services begin for a student.

2. **A close-Up View of the IEP** – In this section, each part of the IEP form used in the state of Nevada is examined. The various components of the IEP are shown and explained. For some sections, an example is provided for a fictitious student named Billy Short.
3. **Practice: Cases and Examples** – The decision-making process that goes into the development of the IEP is explored in this section of the tutorial. First, formats for writing specific components of the IEP are introduced and practiced. Then ways to think about selecting goals, objectives, and placements for specific students are discussed. Finally, three cases of students are presented with incomplete IEP forms. These cases are part of the course requirements for CI 410/610 Special Education Curriculum: General Methods.
4. **Additional Resources** – Web-based resources that focus on the IEP and other federal and state procedures are complied in this section.

Each of these sections, plus the table of contents, can be reached via the navigation bar at the top and smaller links at the bottom of every page on the site. Navigation links for content within each section are found in a column at the left of each page. Text links are also used to take users to various sections for reference or review.

To illustrate, a page from the section, A Close-Up View of the IEP, is reproduced on the next page (the actual web site is in color). This page shows and explains the section of Nevada's IEP form that contains a student's present levels of performance. The various links and navigational aids are labeled. The page also contains a link to an example of present levels of performance statements completed for an elementary-aged student, Billy Short.


Section Title
Navigation bar (same for all pages on the site)
Page Title
A Close-Up View of the IEP
Present Levels of Performance
Section Links:
Introduction
First page
Present levels
Strengths/ special factors
Transition
Goals/objectives
Reporting progress
Special education
Supplementary aides
Related services
State/district assessment
Placement
Data elements
Conducting the IEP meeting
Summary
Information about the student's current achievement levels and learning and behavioral characteristics comprises this entire page (not just the small area illustrated here). In some cases, it may be necessary to use two or more of these pages to record all relevant information.
It is very important to record the student's current performance in all areas, especially all areas of need. Assessment can take the form of standardized tests, but may also include performance on informal inventories or curriculum-based measurements, information from the parents, teacher/professional observations, performance on in-class assignments, and other indications of the student's strengths and needs.
Linked text references other parts of the IEP
The right column of the form is where information is recorded that suggests whether the student will have difficulty with the general curriculum and what the nature of those difficulties might be.
Each area of need identified in the present levels of performance section must be addressed throughout the IEP. These needs may appear in the annual goals and objectives , supplementary aides and services, and/or in the special education services.
Link to an example of this IEP section completed for Billy Short
Go to Billy Short's present levels of performance as an example.
The next section of the IEP describes the student's strengths and consideration of other factors.
Links to all pages in this section
Linked text and arrow to the following section of the IEP
Navigational links to other sections

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The most complex section of the tutorial is entitled **Practice: Cases and Examples**. This section is divided into three major components:

Learning the Format – This section of the tutorial contains five exercises. As the title implies, each of the exercises helps students learn how to write and evaluate the narrative parts of the IEP. The following is a brief explanation of each of the five links and the exercises included:

- Annual Goals - Presents the format and considerations for writing goal statements for an IEP and tying them to Nevada's general curriculum standards.
- Short-term Objectives/Benchmarks - Illustrates how to break annual goals into short-term objectives or benchmarks to demonstrate students progress
- Criteria for Effective Goals and Objectives - Presents criteria for looking at goals and objectives to determine if they reflect preferred practices in special education.
- Fine Tuning - Gives examples of IEP objectives and asks the user to critique them. The students re-write the goals and objectives, then see how another professional might write them
- Justification Statements - Presents format and considerations for writing the placement justification statements in the IEP.

Practice Decision Making – This section of the tutorial uses three brief case studies to introduce students to the decision-making process for determining annual goals, short-term objectives or benchmarks, special education services, and supplementary aides and services for children who have disabilities. In each of the cases, students are given a list of the child's present levels of performance and must determine the areas of need for that child. The students consult the Nevada Curriculum Standards to determine an appropriate goal for one area of need. They use a worksheet to write the annual goal, and then break it into short-term objectives. After designing the goal and objectives, they determine the nature of special education services, supplementary aids and services, and related services. They end the exercise by determining placement and writing a justification statement. Through links, they are able to compare their responses with those of another professional at any step of the process.

It is recommended that students go through the three cases from beginning to the end to see how the decisions throughout the IEP must relate to each other. The cases progress from less to more complex, although they reflect typical needs of children with mild to moderate disabilities.

- Diane Gordon - Diane is a sixth grade student who has learning disabilities in reading comprehension and in math. Diane has no social or behavioral difficulties, and she gets along well with her peers and teachers.
- Sam Philips -Sam is a second grade student with specific learning disabilities in reading and spelling, as well a medical diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Sam has difficulties staying on task, maintaining attention, and impulsive behaviors.
- Albert Culver - Al is a fifth grade student who has mild mental retardation, with a medical diagnosis of Down syndrome. Al receives the related services of the Speech/Language Pathologist (SLP), Occupational Therapist (OT), Adapted Physical Education (APE), as well as the special education teacher. A paraprofessional works with Al in the general classroom. Although Al has some difficulty with age-appropriate social interactions, he has many friends in the 5th grade and no significant behavioral difficulties.

Assigned Cases – This component also present three case studies of children with mild to moderate disabilities. The students are given more detailed background information and the children's present levels of performance. For one case, the students are assigned to groups of about four and most complete an IEP in a collaborative process during a class session. This group process more closely simulates how IEPs are conducted in schools. Students are always surprised how long it takes for them to complete this assignment. The other two cases are used individually by the students to develop an IEP to submit for grading. They may choose whichever child they prefer. The IEP must be completed to a standard of beginning mastery. Students may be asked to re-submit the IEP or return to the tutorial for review, then try again with the other case provided.

Effectiveness of the Tutorial: Preliminary Results

At this point, judgment of the effectiveness of the tutorial is based on limited information. It was used for the first time in the fall semester of 2001 by a class of 24 students (CI 410 Special Education Curriculum: General Methods). The tutorial was delivered as a link from the class site on WebCT. Three sources of information about the effectiveness of the tutorial are available: (1) my subjective assessment of how the use of the tutorial affected the way the course was delivered, as well as the quality of the IEP assignments turned in by the students, (2) tracking data from WebCT indicating how frequently students accessed the class site, and (3) a questionnaire, completed anonymously by students at the end of the course, asking them to assess the effectiveness of the tutorial. Each source of information is discussed below.

In a typical semester prior to the development of the tutorial, I spent approximately five weeks discussing the IEP and other aspects of service coordination, law, and special education procedures. During the semester in which the tutorial was used, I reduced this to two weeks plus one week for the in-class IEP completed in collaborative groups. This allowed more time in the semester to discuss instructional methods and how to make instructional decisions about teaching students with mild to moderate disabilities.

I noticed some interesting trends related to the quality of the IEP assignments submitted for grading. More students received full credit on the assignments than in past semesters, and I feel that most students more thoroughly and accurately completed all parts of the IEP. Four students were asked to re-submit their IEPs. This is approximately the same percentage as in past semesters. The difference is that I was able to direct students to parts of the tutorial that might be most helpful for successful completion of the assignment (whether or not they chose to use the tutorial is another matter and is discussed below).

After the semester was over, I found the student tracking function built into WebCT. This recorded the total number of times each student accessed the site. It is important to note that there were some readings and other course information posted through WebCT, so not all of the times recorded reflected student use of the tutorial. Also, the data do not reflect how long the site was used each time a student accessed it. In addition to the number of times students accessed the site, WebCT indicated the date that each student first used the site. Interestingly, three of the four students who had to re-submit their IEPs were among the students who used the site the least (0-4 times). None of the four students accessed the site for the first time until after they were asked to re-submit the assignment (if they accessed it at all). The mean for the number of times the students in the class accessed the WebCT site was 16.3, with the median being 13 times. Students ranged from not accessing the site at all (three students) to a student who accessed it 65 times.

At the end of the semester, students were asked to evaluate the IEP tutorial. Their responses were anonymous and the questionnaires were sealed until after grades were posted. Nineteen of the 24 students completed the evaluation (79%). Students were asked to determine which part(s) of the tutorial they used and how useful they found each to be. They used a 5-point scale with 5 being "highly useful" to 1 being "not useful." The results of this evaluation are presented in the table below.

	Qualifying for Special Education	A Close-Up View of the IEP	Practice: Cases and Examples	Additional Resources	Did not use the tutorial
Number of students who evaluated this section	14	16	14	7	3
Mean evaluation	4.64	4.94	5.0	4.14	--

In addition, students were asked to evaluate the activities in the section "Practice: Cases and Examples" and to estimate the total amount of time they spent using the tutorial. Room was given on the form for them to write comments and suggestions for improvement of the tutorial. The students' evaluations of the various parts of "Practice: Cases and Examples" are presented below.

	Writing Goals	Writing Objectives	Criteria	Fine-Tuning	Placement Justific.	Case Studies
Number of students who evaluated activities	14	14	12	11	12	14
Mean evaluation	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0

Students reported that they spent from 0 to 15 hours with the tutorial, with the mean being 4.2 hours and the median being 3.5 hours. Seven students wrote comments. All contained positive remarks. Three examples of student comments follow:

I would never have been able to write my IEP for this class if it were not for the IEP tutorial!! It was a lifesaver! I hope it will be offered for teachers in the near future. YOU DID AN EXCELLENT JOB!!

It was wonderful. What a great idea. I hope it goes big. I would buy it!!!

This tutorial helped me practice and fine tune my objectives and goals. I love it; it was a very useful tool.

It is important to note that all the evaluation information presented here is very tentative and based on the experience of one semester. Overall, the students who used the tutorial seemed to value it and feel that it was helpful for the course. Indications are that the tutorial has potential to support the knowledge and skills of preservice teachers in the area of developing IEPs.

Future directions for development of the IEP tutorial could be to add information in related areas such as assessment, transition, behavior intervention plans, and students with more significant disabilities. These components could be used in other courses in the special education sequence. This could enable students tie new information to past learning, as well as get an overall picture of how the IEP process supports all aspects of the education of students with disabilities.

Persons interested in viewing the **IEP Tutorial** will find it at http://online.unr.edu/classes/ci410
Since the site is under development, it is requested that others do not use the site without permission of the developer. Comments about the site and suggestions for improvement would be appreciated, and may be directed via email to cheney@unr.edu

Reference

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USING WRITING STRATEGIES AND VISUAL THINKING SOFTWARE TO ENHANCE THE WRITTEN PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS WITH MILD DISABILITIES

Students with mild disabilities usually perform below grade level in one or more of their core academic subjects. One of the areas that students with mild disabilities show the most difficulty with is in the area of organization and written performance. These students often appear unaware of strategies that could prove helpful to them in the classroom and are frequently inefficient learners. Their school careers are plagued with poor academic performance and low self-esteem (Anderson-Inman, 1999; Okolo, 2000).

Research shows that some of the academic difficulties encountered by students with mild disabilities, can be overcome, at least partially, by combining effective instructional strategies with compensatory strategies (Okolo, 2000). In addition, technology can be utilized in numerous ways to enhance instruction and promote learning with students who have mild disabilities.

Students with learning disabilities often find the demands of their academic curriculum more than they can handle, according to Anderson-Inman (1999). They are faced with an inability to read, and/or write with sufficient fluency. Students with difficulties suffer from low self-esteem and consistent poor academic achievement. They are frequently frustrated by the academic tasks they encounter in school. Motivational issues are important variables affecting the extent to which students are willing to engage in performing academic tasks (Anderson-Inman, 1999).

Teachers consistently report that the use of technology has a positive influence upon student motivation and attitude. However, Lewis (2000) asserts that it is difficult to find objective evidence of attitude changes. A possible explanation for the lack of empirical evidence to show positive effect is that change in attitude toward particular school skills may be interpreted as attitude toward school in general.

Planning and organizing tools can encourage activities such as concept mapping, story webbing, brainstorming, visual graphing, and/or outlining. These tools help students organize their ideas and investigate relationships during the writing process. Many students with mild disabilities have wonderful ideas and stories that can be shared, however, organizing those ideas and thoughts and getting them written down are two very different tasks. Outlining, brainstorming, and concept mapping are robust tools that can help students organize, synthesize, and comprehend content area information. One such program, "Inspiration," can help improve student study skills, acquisition of content area information, and organization of ideas (Anderson-Inman, 1999). Anderson-Inman has developed a repertoire of electronic study strategies, which use this electronic outlining and concept mapping software program. She teaches students to use this software to plan assignments, brainstorm ideas, take notes from textbooks and lectures, synthesize information, and even to self test their knowledge. This software also has the ability to help students brainstorm their ideas, design a story web, and organize during planning phase, which could possibly increase their chance of sharing some of those great ideas they have.

Special educators have long been interested in the use of technology with students who have mild disabilities. They envision the potential of technology to help students compensate for their poor academic skills. There are a number of studies that suggests computers and related technologies have potential for enhancing the performance of students with mild disabilities (Lewis, 1998). However, there is scant research available that explores the idea of teaching writing strategies to students with mild disabilities and then having them use a visual organizational software program such as "Inspiration" to further their chance to produce an organized written language product.

During one full month in the summer of 2001, 24 seventh and eight grade students with mild disabilities were participated in a summer remediation project. Students worked on their written expression skills, computer skills, social skills, and a variety of other academic skills daily. Three primary goals for this project were; first, increase student awareness of post secondary opportunities available to them despite their learning difficulties; second, improve student attitude regarding their school assignments and third, improve written expression performance. Project instructors wanted to determine if any positive chances could be gleaned from an intensive month long project teaching students to use writing strategies, visual thinking software, and word processors. The quality and the quantity of each student's written products were tracked daily, as well as student attitude. Students produced a pre, weekly, and post written product to be evaluated in an effort to evaluate change in performance. In addition, students were interviewed at the beginning and at the end of the project to determine changes in their attitude changed, and teacher observations were gathered daily.

The students in this project were divided into two groups of twelve, to reduce the teacher student ratio during instructional times. On the first day of the project, students were given a questionnaire regarding their prior knowledge of and experiences with computers, their prior knowledge of writing strategies, their perceptions of their own writing abilities, and their attitudes regarding writing. This questionnaire was administered as a pretest and as a posttest to determine if gaining a story writing strategy would influence their attitude about writing.

Writing samples were collected four times. Writing prompts A and B from the Test of Written Language, 3rd edition (TOWL-3) were used as the pretest and the posttest, respectively, to evaluate each student's written language performance. Additionally, a similar story prompt was used at the end of week 2 and another at the end of week 3 to evaluate written language performance. Identical prompts and evaluations were used for all students. Project teachers administered all writing prompts using scripted instructions to assure that all students receive identical information.

The Test of Written Language 3rd edition (TOWL-3) (Hammill and Larson, 1996) was used to examine the differences between student performance at the beginning of the project and at the end of the project. The TOWL-3 is a standardized instrument designed to measure the quality of written expression and determine proficiency in the conventional, linguistic, and cognitive components of the written composition of students from ages 7 to 17. The TOWL is effective in assessing a students' written language performance, and determining strengths and weaknesses in written language (Yarger, 1996).

The TOWL-3 was used to provide a quantitative, well standardized method to assess the students written performance. Three subtests were designed to assess the spontaneous writing composite of the TOWL-3. The three subtests were contextual conventions, contextual language, and story construction. Contextual Convention measures capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Contextual Language measures vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. Story Construction measures sequencing, plot, story beginning and ending, and character development.

All instructors maintained a daily log. Entries emphasized student attitude and academic performance. Additionally, instructors documented observations regarding individual assignments, and the various techniques being used by students. Observed strategy usage was entered in the instructor's log. In addition, the length of time a student engaged in planning and organizing before beginning his/her written product was tracked.

Half (12) of the students were taught the writing strategy, story webbing on the first day of the project, while the other half (12) were reminded of some basic concepts of good writing. These concepts were determined by student brainstorming activities; there were no instructions provided by the project instructors. All experiences were identical for both groups with the expectation that one group was taught a structured writing strategy, while the other

group was not. All students were given a prompt daily and all practiced written language production. The group taught story webbing were required to story web when producing a written product.

After the first few days, the group who had learned story webbing was taught to use the visual thinking software program "Inspiration". This software acts as an organizational tool to allow students to use story webbing to plan their writing. At the end of week two, all students were taught to use story webbing strategy as well as the "Inspiration" software.

All students used computers daily. They conducted research using the Internet. They also practiced their typing skills daily. The software "Type to Learn" was used to familiarize students with computer usage and to improve keyboarding skills. This software program tracked student-keyboarding performance. All students exhibited at least some improvement in their keyboarding skills during the month. Also, instructors documented, repeatedly, positive change in student attitude when given the opportunity to produce work using the computers available.

At the beginning of this project, very few students used any planning strategies at all when given a writing assignment. The overwhelming majority of them simply, yet reluctantly, began to write, when given a prompt. This area showed change as the project proceeded. More and more of the students actually began to plan their writing before they began. One particular student went from zero planning to 4 minutes planning and story webbing before beginning his writing.

In addition, teachers noted decreasing reluctance to write. On the first day of the project, numerous students strongly voiced dissatisfaction with having to produce writing products. In fact, several offered to do anything except write. One particular young man initially refused to write anything. On the last day of this project, this young man asked one of the instructors to read his story to the entire group. Incidentally, this was not an activity that had taken place at all during the project; it was his idea, and his request. Additionally, by the end of the project, this young man was writing nearly a full typed page.

Student interviews, pre and post instruction, showed an increase in positive attitude with respect to writing. In addition, when asked about the value of planning, before writing, the majority of students considered this important during the post interview compared to very few during the pre-instruction interview.

There was a modest improvement in regard to the quality of the written product which most of the students produced. This was perhaps due to the short time frame afforded the project. One month is not very long to exhibit great changes in the quality of one's writing skills. This was a dilemma that was recognized before the project began, however all involved decided that if any change occurred, they would consider the project successful.

There was a more substantial change in the quantity of student products. Written projects gained in length with each of the writing exercises. It appeared that as resistance to writing decreased, the length of the written product increased.

The time allowed for the project was one of the biggest obstacles. One month is not a great deal of time to see changes in student performance in an academic requirement, which historically, has been unsuccessful for many students with mild disabilities. That any change was observed at all is truly encouraging. In addition, computers were used on a daily basis with this project. Not all schools, remedial projects, have the luxury of having computers available for daily usage. However, the project instructors witnessed positive changes in student attitudes when they used the computers. And students generally exhibit a more positive attitude when given the opportunity to produce work using computers (Lewis, 2000). Another obstacle of this project was how well this situation could be generalized into the school system.

The positive outcomes of this project were that students produced longer and slightly better quality written products, and there was less resistance and generally a more positive attitude. Additionally, students became much more comfortable with computer usage, and increased their keyboarding skill. For schools having computers available to their students; with the purchase of two inexpensive software programs, "Inspiration"(approximately $70) and "Type to Learn"(approximately $100 for a lab of 10), and teachers willing to teach writing strategies to students with mild disabilities, the conditions present in this project can be closely duplicated.

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WEBCASTING: A NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR TRAINING SPECIAL EDUCATORS IN RURAL AREAS

Abstract

This paper describes the use of webcasting technology (both simulcasts in real time and re-broadcasts on demand) in a personnel preparation program for practitioners working in early intervention, special education, or adult disability services in a rural state. Technology-mediated distance education is a widely used method of delivering preservice and inservice preparation programs to rural schools and emerging technologies such as video streaming may have promise for improving program accessibility and enhancing program quality. The distance education program in Severe/Multiple Disabilities and Early Intervention Special Education at West Virginia University has successfully utilized webcasting technology to deliver a graduate certification and degree program to practicing but uncertified special educators working in rural areas of the United States as well as in several other locations around the world.

The paper will accomplish four (4) objectives:

1. to describe the application of webcasting technology to programs for special educators working in rural areas;
2. to illustrate hardware and software needed to create, deliver, and receive webcasts;
3. to present initial evaluation data on participant performance and perceptions;
4. to discuss the pros and cons of using webcasting for preservice and inservice training.

The procedures and outcomes described in this project may be useful for college and university faculty and/or state and local school personnel who are currently using or may be considering web-based training options in rural areas.

Introduction to the Webcasting Project

Effective and efficient personnel preparation programs at the preservice and inservice level are essential in insuring a free appropriate public education for all children, but especially in rural areas, where staff recruitment, retention, and development are critical issues. Emerging technologies offer promising solutions to the challenges colleges and universities as well as state and local education agencies face in providing accessible and appropriate training to rural special educators. The webcasting technology described in this session is an innovative approach to helping special education personnel acquire knowledge and skills needed to deliver best practices in rural schools and to acquiring full credentials for licensure/certification in special education or disability services.

Background of the Webcasting Project

Technology-mediated distance education is rapidly becoming widely used for personnel preparation in special education at both the preservice and inservice levels. Today's telecommunications technologies allow quality programs to be delivered to many individuals effectively and efficiently without the barriers of time and space (Howard et al., 1992). A number of universities are now using distance education to address critical personnel shortages, especially in low incidence disabilities in and rural areas (Ludlow, 1998). Although web-based instruction is just now being explored for its distance education potential, it has many promising applications in teacher education in special education. Web-based instruction is especially appropriate for on-the-job training of practitioners because it allows learners to work at home or school to process materials at their own pace, to interact with the instructor and other practitioners as needed, and to receive individually designed feedback as they apply information to real world settings (Kelker et al. 1992; Kendal, 1992). Recent availability of streaming media and higher bandwidth connections now permit the delivery of live interactive sessions on the Internet in real time.

Teacher education programs can harness the potential of this exciting new technology to develop more accessible, lower cost distance education programs.

Description of the Webcasting Project

West Virginia University (WVU) has offered a distance education program at the graduate level leading to teaching certification and a Master's degree in either Severe/Multiple Disabilities or Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education since 1990. All courses in these programs have been offered via unencrypted C-band satellite transmission to individuals attending at colleges, schools, public libraries, and other public sites throughout West Virginia and the surrounding Appalachian region. However, frequent requests by individuals living in more remote rural areas in this region, in other parts of the country without satellite access, or in international locations outside the satellite footprint (signal distribution) prompted the program coordinator to consider how the program could accommodate these prospective students and expand its service area.

In Spring 2001, the program was awarded a small grant (about $15,000) from the WVU Division of Extended Learning to test the feasibility of using videostreaming technology to transmit the live satellite class sessions over the Internet to individuals without satellite access. In collaboration with the program's instructional media producer, the program coordinator developed a system to offer web simulcasts (live class sessions streamed over the web at the same time as satellite broadcasts) as well as re-broadcasts (archived class sessions streamed over the web on demand at any time).

Trial One: Quicktime Streaming

The initial trial of the webcasting project made use of Apple's Quicktime streaming format. Quicktime has the advantage of cross-platform compatibility and high quality images with "skip protection" technology (Waggoner, 2001). The Quicktime tools are the least expensive and easiest to use for videostreaming (Sauer, 2001). The program coordinator and producer tested the system to insure that all components would be up and running prior to the start of the 2000-2001 academic year. In Fall 2000, Quicktime webcasts (both simulcasts and re-broadcasts) were offered in conjunction with two progam courses. A live webcast was streamed during each two hour class session for the 15 weeks of the semester and an archived copy of each class session was also made available on the server. Access to simulcasts was limited to several individuals living outside West Virginia in other states and re-broadcasts were limited to a handful of individuals living overseas.

The program coordinator purchased an Apple OSX streaming server equipped with a 733 Mhx processor and 256 MB RAM, Sorensen Broadcaster streaming software, and enough Sony digital videotapes to record all class sessions for one semester. She also secured use of Apple Macintosh G3 Powerbook with 400 Mhz processor speed and 250 MB RAM to send the signal from the studio to the server and installed an existing copy of Quicktime 4.0 Pro to convert the archived files to a web-friendly format. The media producer obtained a static Internet protocol (IP) address, set up the streaming server, installed the Broadcaster software on the Powerbook 5300 for easy transport to and from the broadcast studio during classes, and created a special icon within the WebCT course management system software where students could link to the live and archived streams. Students were told to insure that their computer had audio and video cards and to download and install a free copy of Apple Quicktime Player 4.0 in their browser's plug-ins folder to view the webcasts.

At the broadcast studio, the production switcher was connected to the Powerbook with a cable and to another desktop computer within the studio so that the producer could monitor the live streams. The Broadcaster software was used to convert the output from the studio switcher on the fly into a Quicktime audio and video stream using the Real Time Streaming Protocol (RTSP). A single stream was sent to the program server at another location where students could access the class session via a link within the university's WebCT course management software. At the same time, the digital video tapes were used in an existing Sony DVX 1000 digital camcorder to record each class session for use in the archived re-broadcasts. During the class session, the instructor monitored the simulcast with a desktop computer. After each broadcast, the Quicktime Pro software on a desktop computer was used to convert the archived tapes (by means of "hinting") for delivery on demand. These archived files were then uploaded to the program server so that students could access the re-broadcasts on demand at any time throughout the course.

In this trial, web simulcasts were made available to students at three sites (in Florida, Virginia, and New York) and re-broadcasts were made available to three students at two different sites on Saipan, and island in the South Pacific. The instructor and media producer worked with these students to identify and solve problems and fine-tune the system. They concluded that Apple Quicktime streaming provided high quality video but only a single stream, which was less effective with some phone modem. The Quicktime webcasts offered excellent results with cable modem or fiber line internet connections, but only fair results with 56K telephone modem access; the international sites were able to get good audio signal but no video signal.

Trial Two: Real Media Streaming

The second trial made use of RealNetworks Real Media streaming format. RealMedua streaming has the advantage of producing several streams at different access rates or using patented Surestream technology to offer a single stream that automatically adjusts to the user's access rate (Waggoner, 2001). The RealMedia tools are more expensive bur offer greater flexibility (Sauer, 2001). In order to insure greater access to the webcasts, the program coordinator and media producer investigated other options for transmitting live and archived video streams. During Fall 2000, they collaborated with technical personnel at the West Virginia Education Network (EDNET) in Institute, West Virginia to explore the uses of Real Media Producer software for transmitting live webcasts and recording archived webcasts.

EDNET personnel set up a rack-mounted Athalon ATX computer with 500 Mhz processor and 64 MB RAM to run the encoder software. They purchased an annual 100 stream Real Producer Pro license from RealNetworks to encode the streams on the fly from the live satellite broadcasts and used a Viewcast Osprey 1 internal PCI video capture card to convert the analog signal to digital signal. They purchased a Microsoft Windows NT 4.0 server with a 700 Mhz dual processor and 86 MB RAM plus a 10 GB drive to store and serve the live and archived video streams. Students were told to insure that their computer had audio and video cards and to download and install a free copy of Real Player Basic 8.0 in their browser's plug-ins folder to view the webcasts.

The program coordinator, the media producer, and EDNET personnel tested the system to insure that all components would be up and running prior to the start of the subsequent semester. In Spring 2001, RealMedia webcasts (both simulcasts and re-broadcasts) were offered in conjunction with two additional program courses. A live webcast was streamed from EDNET during each two hour class session for the 15 weeks of the semester and an archived copy of each class session was also made available on the EDNET server. The instructor and students both logged onto the web course and accessed the link to the webcasts, and the instructor also monitored the live webcasts from the studio during each class session.

In this trial, access to simulcasts was extended (on a limited basis) to a handful of individuals living within West Virginia (in addition to those living outside the state) for a total of eight students and access to re-broadcasts was extended to some other students in the course (as well as individuals living overseas) for a total of 18 students. The instructor and media producer worked with these students to identify and solve problems and fine-tune the system. They concluded that Real Media streaming provided lower quality video but the Surestream technology allowed the stream to be adjusted to the user's Internet access, which made the webcasts more accesible via telephone modem. The Real Media webcasts offered excellent results with cable modem or fiber line internet connections, and good results with 56K telephone modem access; the international sites were able to get good audio signal and fair video signal.

Outcomes of the Webcasting Project

The WVU Webcasting Project has been a success from both the institution's perspective and the students' perspective. The availability of web simulcasts has enabled students living in states other than West Virginia to participate in the certification and degree program; to date, 10 students have enrolled in courses from states such as California, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, and Virginia. The simulcasts are also used frequently by students in West Virginia when they cannot access the satellite broadcasts due to technical problems at their site or if they must be absent due to illness or bad weather. The availability of re-broadcasts has allowed six individuals living in international areas to join the program; four students have enrolled from Saipan, an island in the South Pacific and two have enrolled from Iceland. The program has received additional inquiries from individuals in Belize, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Scotland. The re-broadcasts are also used often by all students to

review content or activities from the broadcast/webcast sessions as needed throughout the course. Beginning with the Spring 2002 semester, program staff no longer make videotape copies of class sessions for students who miss class because they can access the webcasts online more quickly and with less effort. The program coordinator has made the decision to stay with the Real Media video streaming for the time being, because it is more easily accessed by a wider range of equipment, even though the overall quality of the video image is not as good as the Quicktime streaming.

Webcasting is now a permanent component of the distance education program in Severe/Multiple Disabilities at WVU and it may also be appropriate for other personnel preparation programs in rural areas. The advantages of webcasting include enhanced access to training programs in even the most remote rural areas; reduction in the cost and effort associated with duplicating videotapes copies of class sessions; and provision of opportunity for national and even international outreach. The disadvantages of webcasting are the lower quality of the video image online compared with high quality images via satellite; the bandwidth limitations in some areas of the country or the world; and the continuing technical difficulties with the streaming server and the users' computers. Nevertheless, webcasting represents a viable option for delivering instruction in real and/or delayed time as well as an acceptable balance between program quality and accessibility.

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Transition

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EXEMPLARY TRANSITION PRACTICES IN WOOD COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

Overview of Program

The Community Integration Work Program (CIWP) of Wood County Schools serves Special Education students starting in 7th grade or age 14 through graduation or age 21.

In the 7th grade or age 14 a McCarron Dial Vocational assessment is given to each special education student in the county if the parents have signed permission for the test or it was on the IEP.

In the 8th grade during the IEP meeting the results of the test are gone over with the parents, student, teachers, guidance counselor and administrator.

In the 9th grade we help with the IEP and the Transitional IEP to the high school.

In the 10th grade or age 16 the McCarron Dial is administered again, unless the student scored semi-skilled or above in the 7th grade. If the test is administered again, we look for progress in the skill level of the student and improvement in the different areas of the test; these results are gone over during the annual IEP meeting. Also CIWP is involved in talking with the students about the program and looks at scheduling of students for the following year. If the student elects to be in CIWP the schedule is set so the student has either a morning or afternoon blocked off for the program. At Parkersburg South High this means 2 blocks, at Williamstown High it means 3 class periods and at Parkersburg High it could mean 1 or 3 class periods depending on the student. A Geist Interest Inventory is given to all students who are to be in CIWP. This tells us their likes and dislikes, so a correct job placement can be made, that is beneficial to the student in his/her career choice. Also during this year a referral is made to the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services for assistance in transition to work or additional training after graduation. This could be training at the Rehabilitation Center, SW Resources, College, vocational school or specialized training after graduation.

In the 11th grade or age 17 if the student is in CIWP they are placed in a non-paid work site for 2 blocks if a Parkersburg South student, 3 periods for Williamstown High students and 1 to 3 periods for Parkersburg High students. We have goals and objectives in the IEP and are a Related Service time wise on the IEP. Sometimes if the student has had no experience working they are placed in-house, this means for a semester they work with in the school. They could be assigned to help the custodians, secretaries, cafeteria staff, attendance office or with the librarians. From this they would then go into the community if they have mastered some essential job skills. Also some students are placed in formal vocational classes with or without modifications.

In the the 12th grade, if on a standard diploma we do the IEP, work experience in the community, exit interviews before graduation and referrals are made to outside agencies (i.e. Westbrook Mental Health, Worthington, DRS, etc).

If the student is on a modified diploma we will work with them in the community until the last semester before aging out of the system. During the last semester referrals are made and appointments are made to outside agencies that will be the students placement after graduation. This could be with DRS, community placement, SW

Resources (Sheltered Workshop), Westbrook Day Program or in the Westbrook Stimulation Program for those that are unable to function without total care on a daily basis.

Program Management

The Community Integration Work Program (CIWP) consists of four professionals (two Community Coordinators and two School Coordinators) and six job trainers (Aides/ Paraprofessionals).

There are three high schools in the county. The largest high school, Parkersburg High has two of the professionals and three job trainers, while the other two professionals and three job trainers are assigned to Parkersburg South and Williamstown High Schools.

The community coordinator is responsible for: contacting business for job sites; for placement of students in appropriate work experience sites; for contacting parents; for arranging transportation; for supervision of job trainers and students, etc. The community coordinator, prior to placement, reviews the Geist and the McCarron Dial Vocational Assessment to better understand the abilities of each student. The students visit a variety of job sites. Some students have requested a job site that we have not used. The coordinator then makes contact with the owner/manager and presents them with a contract and other papers used in the program to examine. (The most often asked question is: " What happens to a student who gets hurt on the job?" LIABILITY). She also meets with the students and discusses possible placements and exactly where the student is to be placed. The student, parent, and coordinator decide the job site that is most desirable for the student. Future employment is also considered. In some situations, the student must complete an application and an interview with the work site supervisor (usually the personnel director, manager, assistant manager). The coordinator is responsible for the "paper work". This includes contracts and transportation forms. She contacts the transportation director and submits a list of students and job sites to be used and the schedules of when the students need to be at work and when they need to back at their home schools This is done several weeks in advance of placement. The schedule is reviewed and often times need to be re-worked due to lack of time on the site. This often happens with the students who are working in the afternoon due to buses having to get to certain schools for dismissal deadlines. Other means of transportation are considered. We are fortunate to have a city bus line (some buses are handicapped accessible). Our County Special Education Department has a contract with the bus line and the students ride for half price ($.25) with one transfer included if needed. Many times we buy a monthly pass, which permits each student to ride an unlimited amount of time, even on Saturdays for $10 per month. Sometimes this is more economical. We have also used taxis on a contractual basis, but only if nothing else is available. Students are permitted to drive their cars with the approval of the school administration. These students must have a written permission from their parents. After all paperwork is complete and the placements have been made (transportation worked out, too). Then, the coordinator must supervise the trainers and the students and be available for the major/minor problems that may arise. Each of the coordinators has a pager that is paid for by the county special education department. Evaluations are done at the end of each semester. Students are placed on two job sites a school year. Most students have three to four placements prior to graduation. This is based on their exceptionality and the IEP. The coordinator is also responsible for "paying" the students at the end of each grading period. She also attends and writes the IEP's for the students in the program and other students in the county. Several contacts are made with the parents to discuss their child's progress. Written reports are also required by the county at midterm and at the end of each grading period. Those students who are receiving standard diplomas are graded (and receive comments) and those students on a modified diploma receive only comments.

The school coordinator at Parkersburg High is responsible for training the future community work experience students. She works with the students one to two hours a day in the school. The students are taught: the use of a time clock, responsible and appropriate work behaviors, completion of an application, calling off when not in attendance and a variety of work experiences. These students are placed in a variety of jobs throughout the school. Each student must meet with the school coordinator prior to placement to view the job sites available at the school. The school coordinator does all IEP's for these students and many others. She also contacts parents concerning the progress of the students. Comments and grades are submitted at mid term and at the end of each grading period.

The school coordinator at Parkersburg South and Williamstown High Schools is in a unique situation. The students at the junior highs that feed into these two schools have in-house work sites all ready set up in their

respective schools. This makes these students ready for community placements at age 16 or 11th grade. She helps the junior highs with their in-house sites with paper work and supervision.

The job trainers from all schools keep daily logs of each student's performance. They also are responsible for making sure that the parents and the students complete all paperwork. These include: medical forms, transportation forms, picture release forms, permission to be transported by CIWP staff form. These must be duplicated and a substitute folder is placed at each job site for each student. The trainers work very closely with the employers and the employees. Each trainer learns the jobs at the sites and assists the students to learn the jobs assigned to them. The trainer supervises the students and contacts the coordinator if a situation arises that the trainer believes the coordinator must be aware of or needs to intervene, the trainer will then call or page the coordinator. The trainers give each student a list of phone numbers that they must call if they are absent. (These numbers are the job site, transportation, and CIWP office.) The trainer also assists in the evaluation of the student's performance. The trainers assist in teaching students to ride the bus and often "tail" the buses to make sure the student makes their correct connections. Coordinators also assist in this training when needed.

The four professionals are all certified in the administration of the McCarron Dial Vocational Assessment. The assessments are given each year to 7th and 10th graders. This year there are approximately 300 assessments to be given. The school coordinator in conjunction with the junior highs schedules the date and time the testing will take place. The junior highs provide the student schedules and a place to test in the school. The students are taken out of non-major classes for the hour-long evaluation. When the 10th grade student evaluations are finished, a referral is made to the Department of Rehabilitation Services. This agency is responsible for meeting with the students prior to graduation in order to discuss their future plans and needs. They must also determine if the student is eligible for their services, by their guidelines. Upon completion of these evaluations, one of the two coordinators attends the IEP meeting in order to explain the results of the assessment. At this time the transition portion of the IEP is initiated. Transition plans are required for all students age fourteen or older or when requested by the teacher/parent at an earlier age if appropriate.

Transportation Issues

Most of our students are transported to their worksite by county school buses. The scheduling is a tedious and time-consuming venture. So, plan the job site placements well in advance. For example, before you leave for the summer, present your list of sites and students for the fall. This gives the transportation director the time to post the positions for the extra daily runs. Then, within a few days of the start of the new school year, the student's transportation is in place and they can start their work experience within three days of the start of classes. Also prior to leaving for Christmas vacation, again submit the list for second semester. Hopefully, you will be able to start students on the first day of second semester classes. We found that transportation is a problem in the afternoons when buses need to get to different schools for dismissal. The majority of the students at Parkersburg High ride the city buses from their worksite back to school or if their homes are on the route, they ride the buses home. This is in the afternoon only. This is not the case with students at Parkersburg South and Williamstown High Schools. These students have been able to get in their time at the worksite and ride the county school buses back to school, only on one occasion has this not worked out. Many times the trainers or the coordinators ride with the students to demonstrate how to pay, how to flag the bus, transfer and how to pull the cord for a stop. Training is the essential element. Sometimes this is done at the beginning of the school year when bus schedules are not completed. We will catch the bus to the mall and make sure that a transfer is involved with the "trail" run. We try to have more than one student on the bus. This helps their confidence. We also "trail" the buses at the beginning of each semester, to make sure they get on and off at the appropriate places. (We have learned from experience....) Our Special Education Department has a contractual agreement with our city bus line. We have tickets that coast $.25 and allow for one transfer. We also can purchase monthly bus passes for $10. This permits the pass holder to ride unlimited amount of times during the month. After, the student feels convertible, we have discovered that many of our students use the passes in the evenings and on Saturdays. We also teach the students to read the bus route map and try to reinforce the time that buses run. In special cases, we have used the taxi service. This is also on a contractual basis. This is the most expensive means of transportation for the students. At times, (rarely, and we don't make it a practice) students have been transported by the coordinators or trainers. This is only done in emergencies and then both the trainer and coordinator or the two coordinators are transporting. Never transport a student by yourself. You are opening yourself up to problems. The trainers are paid mileage from morning job site to afternoon site, and the coordinators are paid mileage between schools and job sites.

Grant Ideas

We have been very fortunate to get money from the Henry Logan Children's Home Foundation. This money is used to pay the students $1.00 a day for attendance. This money is then used to buy break snacks or clothes needed to work. The students have learned to cash checks, where to get checks cashed, budgeting skills and the ability to buy items that are not available through other means. A majority of our students are on free and reduced lunch, so this money is extra for them.

IEP Suggestions

We use the information from the McCarron Dial Vocational Assessment and observations for our present level of educational performance. Example: Teacher observations and reports indicate that Bertha's interpersonal skills and appropriate work behaviors are deficient. According to the McCarron Dial Vocational Assessment, Bertha's level of vocational functioning is within the semi-skilled range. This vocational program level is described as occupational exploration; skills training and or apprenticeship placement are emphasized at this level. Bertha requires direct instruction of pre-occupational skills and hands on activities in the community, away from the school setting to enhance self-esteem and vocational level. An annual goal for this student may be Bertha will improve her work behaviors and vocational skills by participation in work experience in the community with CIWP. Listed below are short-term goa'is that we use (our cheat sheets):

1. _____ will exhibit appropriate safety skills/habits on the worksite after instruction and modeling by trainer.
2. _____ will follow routine procedures, as directed by staff, for reporting absences from worksite.
3. _____ will follow designated schedule as assigned by CIWP staff.
4. _____ will maintain appropriate personal hygiene (i.e. clean and combed hair, shaved, showered/bathed, and use of personal care products, clean clothes) for the worksite.
5. _____ will follow and accept directions given by person (s) involved in the training of job skills without negative responses.
6. _____ will decrease need for constant supervision by knowing work routine and taking initiative to move on to next task.
7. _____ will demonstrate appropriate social skills after instruction and modeling on the worksite (i.e. Greetings, manners)
8. _____will increase time on task with decreasing verbal prompts.
9. _____ will increase his/her work activities with decreasing verbal prompts.
10. _____ will participate in simulated workshop activities with his work quota increasing and improving.
11. _____will participate in pre-vocational workshop in the school simulated setting to increase productivity.
12. _____will exhibit appropriate problem solving techniques when encountering a problem on the worksite.
13. _____will increase his/her productivity in the school worksite.
14. _____will exhibit initiative to move on to the next task on the job site with decreasing prompts
15. _____will exhibit appropriate, mature work behaviors on the job site after modeling.
16. _____will cooperate with co-workers and supervisors on the job site.
17. _____ will make eye contact with peers, co-workers, trainers, and supervisors when talking with them.
18. _____ will demonstrate the ability to know when to go on break and when to return to work on the job site.
19. _____ will demonstrate the ability to refrain from complaining about health problems (aches and pains) on the job site.
20. _____ will exhibit appropriate social behavior on the worksite (no profanity or negative responses).
21. _____ will demonstrate the ability to travel independently by riding the city bus, after training

These can be made more specific depending on the behaviors you want to decrease or increase.

Local Division of Rehabilitation Service

This agency takes our referrals and contacts the parents about trying to qualify for services. Just because a student qualifies for Special Education does not mean they will qualify for Rehab Services. They have their own guidelines just like Special Education. If the parents have not contacted DRS after several tries by them, CIWP will invite DRS to the next IEP meeting so contact is made. DRS explains the program to the student and his/her

parents, and an application is taken. If the student qualifies for services and IWRP is written before graduation and plans are set into motion for after graduation. Some students are sent to the DRS training facility, others are given community work with a trainer similar to CIWP, some qualify for vocational school training or even college help. This is a great help with transition services for some of our students.

Other Outside Agencies

We also can use the services of Westbrook Mental Health, which requires the student and parent apply for service with them. They are then given a case manager who can help with housing, training, res-care services, medical needs, etc. Westbrook also runs a Day Program and Stimulation Program for individuals who are more limited in abilities and need specialized care.

RIM is another agency who has been of benefit for some students. They provide services in the form of case management and housing for the handicapped.

All the professionals in CIWP belong to the Community Service Council, which is a group of organizations that provide services to individuals in the community. Most of these organizations are non-profit and we have used some of their different services for job sites and help with students and their families. It has been very beneficial to get some of the community leaders to understand the purpose and benefits of our program. Some organizations have asked how they can help the students and us make better use of resources found in the community. These community organizations have helped find appropriate clothing for students who need a particular color or style of shirt, pant, or shoe for a work site.

Possible Job Sites

Here is a list of some possible job sites you may find in your particular county or area:
Wal-Mart
K-mart
Grocery stores (non-union)
Hospitals- laundry, cafeteria, housekeeping, dietetics
Service stations/ Jiffy Lubes
Colleges- cafeterias, library, bookstores, custodians, parking attendants
Senior citizen centers
YMCA/YWCA
Public libraries
Restaurants
National chains- JC Penney's, Sears, Target, etc
Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts
Court House/ Municipal buildings

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INDIVIDUALIZED TRANSITION PLANNING FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN RURAL AREAS

IDEA now requires individualized transition plans (ITPs) for all public school students with learning disabilities. These plans must be in place no later than the age of 14, and sooner if warranted. Writing ITPs for students with learning disabilities presents some unique problems, and not all school districts are adequately meeting the transition needs of these students. We have identified a number of common problems in writing appropriate ITPs: (1) public schools often do not make an effort to coordinate with community agencies or postsecondary educational institutions that are most likely to provide services for individuals with learning disabilities; (2) individual transition plans (ITPs) are not developed early enough in the student's school experience; (3) plans often do not include personal awareness goals and objectives; (4) ITPs may focus exclusively on academic instruction and remediation rather than including goals and objectives related specifically to the world of work; and (5) ITP goals and objectives are rarely based on career development theory and research.

Public Schools Should Coordinate with Postsecondary Community Agencies and Educational Institutions. It is important for public school personnel and parents to realize that not all learning disabilities are "mild." Therefore, it is important that careful planning and coordination occur between the school and postsecondary work or educational agencies to ensure a smooth transition from school to work or higher education. Further, evaluation of the student's progress should occur on an ongoing basis once the student leaves the public school.. For example, if a student is going on to a community or four-year college, transition planning should include arrangements for student services to begin at the start of the first semester. These services might include provisions for individual tutoring, note-takers, books on tape, test-taking, and counseling. If a student is going to be involved in vocational training through a community agency, such as vocational rehabilitation, the student should have access to agency representatives who ideally should maintain an office within the secondary school.

Individualized Transition Plans Should Be Developed Early. Although IDEA states that ITPs should be in place by the age of 14, this may not be early enough for many students with learning disabilities. The literature indicates that all students could profit from early career education and planning. This is especially true for students with learning disabilities, who have difficulty envisioning the future and may need repetitive work-related experiences early in their school careers. Thus, ITPs for these students should be developed as early as elementary school.

Plans Should Include Personal Awareness Goals and Objectives. Not all learning disabilities are solely academic in nature. Many of these students suffer from interpersonal and organizational problems in addition to academic underachievement. These difficulties frequently seriously affect their school and personal lives, and will eventually affect their work lives. Fortunately, because these students have at least normal intelligence, many of these problems can be accommodated or even corrected. To accomplish this, however, requires many years of work and effort on the part of parents, teachers and the students themselves. Therefore, any transition planning for students with learning disabilities must include goals for improving social deficits and begin in the early grades. Also, parents should be made aware of these problems through careful counseling.

ITPs Should Include Goals and Objectives Related Specifically to the World of Work. Research has shown that when individuals with disabilities lose their jobs, it is seldom because they are unable to perform specific work tasks. Instead, it is because of other problems such as lack of punctuality, poor organization, and failure to get along with coworkers or supervisors. Therefore, those planning ITPs should make sure include these important work-related skills.

ITP Goals and Objectives Should Be Based on Career Development Theory and Research.. There is an extensive body of career development theory and research. However, there have been relatively few attempts to apply this

theory and research in the field of special education. Instead, much of the literature on career and vocational special education is atheoretical in nature. One theory that has been shown to be useful in dealing with students with learning disabilities is John Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments (Holland, 1997). It is this theory that we have found most useful in transition planning, and it is the subject of the next section of this paper.

John Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments

According to Holland, there are six vocational personalities and work environments. These personalities and environments are as follows: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. The Realistic personality prefers to be engaged in work requiring physical abilities and would rather work with things than people. The Investigative personality enjoys working with concepts and ideas in isolated environments. The Artistic personality enjoys creating things and values people as audiences for their work. The Social personality enjoys helping and associating with people. The Enterprising personality is a risk-taker and values money and power. These types depend on other people to help them achieve their goals. Finally, the Conventional type prefers to work with numbers and data, prefers structure and order, and is happiest working in isolation. The six work environments support and nurture the corresponding personality types. Those individuals whose personality is congruent (in tune with) their work environment will tend to be satisfied and successful in their work. Conversely, if the personality and the work environment are not congruent, an individual is likely to be unhappy and unsuccessful. For example, the Realistic personality working in a Realistic environment (an auto shop, for instance) is likely to experience satisfaction and stability on the job. The Realistic personality working in a Social environment is unlikely to enjoy the experience or to be successful.

Holland believes that individuals are most likely to find work that is congruent with their personalities after having had many and appropriate early experiences with diverse workers and work environments. He suggests that these experiences be provided to children in elementary school so that they can begin to make good career choices by the time they are in high school. However, our research (Cummings & Maddux, 1987) indicates that career education and vocational planning for students with learning disabilities does not consider their work personalities. Rather, ITPs for these students, when they do include plans for vocational training, include goals and objectives that emphasize work in Realistic environments away from people. In our own research, we discovered that learning disabled high school students have work personalities as varied as nondisabled students, but are most likely to have Social personalities. Considering that learning disabled students are most likely to receive vocational training to prepare them for Realistic work environments, the environment most unlike the Social environment, may account for some of the high rate of job dissatisfaction and failure of individuals with learning disabilities who have graduated from high school.

Holland has developed an assessment instrument, the Self-Directed Search (SDS), to help individuals identify their work personality and the job environments that would be most suitable for them. The SDS has been validated by thousands of empirical studies and provides a solid theoretical basis for transitional planning. In addition, Holland has published the Self-Directed Search, Form Easy (SDS-E) which is appropriate for students who read at fourth-grade level. The SDS-E has been shown to produce results equivalent to those obtained with the SDS. Furthermore, the SDS and the SDS-E may be read to students who have reading problems.

In our view, the SDS or SDS-E should be used to facilitate transition planning for students with learning disabilities. Once a student's work personality has been identified, appropriate educational or vocational planning may occur. Either form of the SDS may be used in conjunction with Holland's Directory of Occupational Titles or the U. S. Department of Labor's Dictionary of Occupational Titles to identify a variety of work environments that are congruent with the student's work personality. Educators in rural areas might also develop their own community directory of job placements categorized by Holland work environments. For example, the local florist might be an excellent job placement for students with Artistic personalities. A farm or ranch, on the other hand, might be an appropriate placement for students with Realistic personalities.

Conclusion

Based on the most recent research (Dunn, 1996), adolescents and young adults with learning disabilities do not always fare well when they make the transition from high school to work or postsecondary education. This may occur for a number of reasons. Transition planning may not be appropriate for many students with learning disabilities. Then, too, planning may not begin early enough, and usually is atheoretical in nature. In our view, ITPs for students with learning disabilities should be developed in elementary school and should address each student's individually determined academic, interpersonal and occupational needs.

Finally, if individuals with learning disabilities are to make a successful transition to adult work and living, they must be educated about work, about the relationship between their personality traits and congruent work environments, and about the various work environments in their communities.

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MEETING THE TRANSITION NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN RURAL SETTINGS: TWO NEW RESOURCES FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Transition Services in Rural Areas

The presentation of two new documents designed to ensure that the transition services requirements of IDEA of 1997 and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 are implemented in rural areas is fully aligned with President Bush's initiative and the conference theme, "No Child Left Behind: The Vital Role of Rural Schools." Specifically, since 19% of schools and 9% of students in the United States are located in rural areas (U.S Department of Education, 2000a), personnel preparation activities is imperative (Collins, 1999). Research has documented that low numbers of students with disabilities in small schools, as well as difficulties recruiting and retaining special education teachers, intensify the difficulties of ensuring that students with disabilities receive quality special education and related services in rural areas (American Association of School Administrators, 1999; Collins, 1999; Mullins, Morris, & Reinoehl, 1997; Westling & Whitten, 1996).

The importance of transition services for students with disabilities on post school results has been identified by the U.S. Department of Education (The Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities, 2000; Research Triangle Institute, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2000b), the National Council on Disability (2001), and numerous researchers (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Colley & Jamison, 1998). Difficulties in implementing transition services in rural areas have been identified by numerous researchers. For example, data indicates that high school graduates with disabilities in rural settings are less likely to be employed than are students in urban settings (Dunn & Schumaker, 1997; Sitlington & Frank, 1994). Williams, Martin, and Hess (2002) reported that designing statements of transition service needs and statements of needed transition services for students ages 14 and 16, respectively, was an areas of difficulty experienced in rural areas according to a survey of members of the American Council on Rural Special Education (ACRES). In addition, research indicates that Native American students exiting the school system need quality transition programming to obtain employment and participate in independent living (Heimbecker, et al., 2001; Ramasamy, Duffy, & Camp, 2000).

A critical component of effective transition planning is the linkage with community resources and agencies that are likely to provide or pay for transition services after the student leaves the school setting. Lindsey and Blalock (1993) reported that effective transition services in rural settings require the development of a collaborative ethic among all constituents, including community representatives and adult service providers. Similarly, Harmon (1998) reported that effective transitioning of youth in rural settings requires strong community involvement to set goals, serve as a learning community for students, provide service learning opportunities, and create school-based entrepreneurial activities. Indeed, Beaulieu (2000) offered that effective implementation of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 in rural communities requires the active participation of all school, community, and business leaders.

However, Foley and Mundschenk (1997), in a national survey, found that secondary special educators are generally not familiar with adult service agencies that are likely to provide or pay for transition services and hence very infrequently invite them to a student's IEP meeting. Further, in a review of monitoring reports from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education issued between 1993 and 1997, Williams and O'Leary (2000; 2001) found few states are implementing this transition services provision to the extent mandated by IDEA. If an

agency is identified and a representative is involved in transition planning, studies have reported that it is most likely vocational rehabilitation (de Fur, Getzel, & Kregel, 1994; Grigal, Test, Beattie, and Wood, 1997). For students in rural settings, research has indicated that effective linkages with vocational rehabilitation are a key element of successful transition programs (Benz, Johnson, Mikkelsen, & Linkstrom, 1995; Griffin, Flaherty, Hammis, Katz, Maxson, & Shelley, 2000). Further, as Griffin and his colleagues (2000) and Miller and Hahn (1997) have demonstrated, effective transition is a possible mission.

Session Purpose and Objectives

The National Council on Disability reports that one of the best strategies for improving the quality of school programs and post-school outcomes is "carrying out the IDEA and transition services requirements and, where appropriate, the Rehabilitation Act provisions for eligible students." The report also states that, unfortunately, this strategy is the least often used (National Council on Disability, 2001).

Therefore, the purpose of this session is to share two recently published technical assistance guides designed to assist educators, rehabilitation counselors, students, and families in planning for and providing transition services. The information in both of these guides are consistent with the transition requirements of both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA).

The first guide, *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 Transition Requirements: A Guide for States, Districts, Schools, Universities and Families*, was vetted by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs and published by the National Transition Network. This guide is designed to provide a clear understanding of the transition requirements of IDEA and includes examples and suggested practices critical for implementing the transition requirements of IDEA. The guide contains:

- A step-by-step process for addressing transition services in the IEP
- Checklists to align practices with the transition requirements
- Questions and answers about transition services
- An extensive resource list of materials
- A sample Individualized Education Program (IEP) with example transition statements
- Sample letters to students, families, and other agencies
- Sample transfer of rights documents

The second guide, *Meeting the Transition Challenge Together: A Guide for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Educators,* was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. The guide is intended to show the relationship of the transition provisions of IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Throughout this document, the authors provide descriptions and examples for linking the student's statement of needed transition services under IDEA with his or her Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). This guide contains:

- A description of the role of vocational rehabilitation counselors, special education personnel, and others in developing IEPs and IPEs
- A process for developing IEPs and IPEs for students with mild and more significant disabilities
- A checklist for transition requirements under the Rehabilitation Act; a question and answer section about IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act
- Contact information for State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, State Education Agencies, Parent Training and Information Centers, Rehabilitation Continuing Education Programs (RCEPs), and state Workforce Investment Act (WIA) offices
- Consumer and student's rights and responsibilities materials
- A sample interagency agreement
- A side-by-side description of transition-related statutory and regulatory citations from the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

The National Transition Network schedules this document for publication in late winter or early spring 2002.

Both documents have applicability to practitioners, students and families in rural areas. One of the presenters is currently engaged in transition outcomes projects in 16 states, 7 of which are in states with major rural areas including Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools. This project is demonstrating improvement and results in helping districts meet the transition requirements. Many of the strategies from these model projects can be replicated and implemented in rural districts throughout the country.

The presenters will provide copies of both documents to participants and present the major pieces of both documents. The session will be interactive with participants and presenters discussing strategies for ensuring that students in rural settings have available transition planning and services consistent with IDEA of 1997 and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

The objectives of the session are the following:

- Provide two technical assistance guides designed to assist practitioners meet the transition requirements of IDEA and WIA
- Provide a forum for discussing strategies for meeting the transition requirements of both laws in rural settings
- Provide strategies for linking the IEP and IPE for students in rural settings, including strategies for engaging adult service providers, community agencies, school personnel, and rehabilitation counselors.

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RURAL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION: AN ACRES SURVEY

The Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) is currently reviewing an article on this research study for publication in its *Journal on Higher Education and Disability*.

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ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT: NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND DURING STATEWIDE TESTING

Standards-based reform has swept across our nation's educational system over the past decade. On both national and state levels, data have been collected, often through wide-scale testing, to help determine the current state of our educational system, identify problems, and develop plans for continued improvement (Vanderwood, McGrew, & Ysseldyke, 1998). The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (P.L. 105-17, 1997 [IDEA 97]) clarified that special education was to fully participate in these educational accountability systems. IDEA 97 mandated that all students with disabilities participate in statewide testing and that those students who are unable to participate in the general assessment system, even with appropriate accommodations, must participate through an alternate assessment. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team was given the responsibility of determining the most appropriate of the following three options: (1) the student would participate in the general assessment without accommodations; (2) the student would participate in the general assessment with accommodations; or (3) the student would complete an alternate assessment. IDEA 97 did not mandate the content or form of the alternate assessment, but required that a system for alternate assessment be in place by July 1, 2000. The Act specified that results of the alternate assessments must be reported with the same frequency and in the same detail as assessment results for students without disabilities.

Schools across the nation have responded to the call for reform by collecting data to measure progress toward educational goals. Until recently, however, results for students with disabilities were rarely included in such data collection, as these students were typically excluded from statewide testing (Vanderwood et al., 1998). Ysseldyke and Olsen (1999) emphasized the importance of the inclusion of students with disabilities in statewide assessment when they stated: "It has been argued that when students with disabilities are out of sight in assessment and accountability systems they are out of mind when policy decisions are made and when educational structures and programs are designed" (p. 175). This point was brought out as well by the title of an article by Burgess and Kennedy (1998): *What Gets Tested, Gets Taught, Who Gets Tested, Gets Taught.* Excluding students from statewide testing may also result in denying them the anticipated benefits of accountability (e.g., higher expectations, increased student performance). Thurlow, Elliott, and Ysseldyke (as cited in Thompson, Quenemoen, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 2001), discussed the impact of including/excluding students with disabilities in statewide testing. Three important arguments for including all students in the assessment process emerged from their discussion: (1) all students must be included to obtain an accurate picture of the educational system (i.e., accurate comparisons across schools, districts, and states cannot be made if some districts assess all students and some assess only a portion of their students); (2) excluding students from assessment because they are not expected to do well may lower expectations for student achievement; and, perhaps most importantly, (3) policy decisions and resource allocation may be based on the results of the assessments, and if students with disabilities are not represented in the reported results, their performance will not influence the decision-making.

It is critical that the educational needs of students with severe disabilities are not overshadowed by the needs of the much larger number of students participating in the general statewide testing. When designed and implemented to hold the educational system accountable for positive outcomes for students with disabilities, alternate assessment systems may become a powerful tool for system improvement. This paper presents a review of the progress made in the development of alternate assessments. Although states have followed different paths in creating alternate assessments, any approach must address the issues of assessment purpose, standards/content, eligibility, form, scoring, and reporting. Discussion of these issues forms the remainder of this paper.

Assessment Purpose

Alternate assessments may be used to measure student performance, system performance, or both. Kleinert, Haig, Kearns, and Kennedy (2000) noted that statewide assessment systems (including alternate assessments) may be thought of more as a matter of school accountability than of student accountability. Clearly, schools must be held

accountable for providing the opportunities and appropriate resources for students to achieve the standards and goals upon which they are assessed. Measuring student performance is not independent from measuring system performance, as student performance informs the discussion of system performance. An alternate assessment system can be seen as a means of evaluating the degree to which the educational system is meeting the needs of students with severe disabilities (i.e., a basis for drawing conclusions about the educational system's performance). Information about each student's individual performance may be valuable in determining how well that student's needs are being addressed, and aggregated information may be helpful for decisions made on a systemic level. Analysis of the assessment results should indicate programmatic strengths and weaknesses. If, for example, the assessment includes a measure of generalization, but analysis of the assessment results indicates the students are unable to demonstrate generalization (due to lack of opportunity it appears, as all instruction took place in the special education classroom), this indicates a system weakness. The power of such assessment systems to drive improvement in educational systems would be demonstrated should such a scenario result in the school revising its instructional practices and placing a greater emphasis on generalization of skills. How states will use the results of alternate assessments remains to be seen, but the opportunity exists to develop this process into a powerful tool for system improvement.

Standards

Standards refer both to what students should know (i.e., content standards) and how well they should know it (i.e., performance standards). The instructional goals and objectives for students with severe disabilities are usually quite different from those reflected in statewide testing. General education assessment systems typically address standards in the areas of language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science (Ford, Davern, & Schnorr, 2001). Functional goals such as dressing oneself, safely crossing the street, or using public transportation do not fit easily under such standards. However, creating a separate set of standards for students with disabilities raises the issue of creating separate educational systems (Ysseldyke, Olsen, & Thurlow, 1997). IDEA 97 made it clear that students with disabilities must have access to the general education curriculum, and the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-382) required that standards apply to *all* students, including those with disabilities. These Acts would seem to discourage separate standards.

In an effort to resolve the dilemma of applying high standards to all students, states have used a variety of strategies for describing the relationship between the functional curriculum accessed by students with severe disabilities and the general standards. Most states described their alternate assessments as being based on exactly the same standards as the assessments for students without disabilities (or a subset of those standards), and have expanded the standards to include functional skills as indicators (Thompson et al., 2001). Ford et al. (2001) discussed some of the problems involved in expanding the standards. They noted that general standards are typically expanded by either simplifying or redefining the existing standards. Simplifying may result in documentation of minor participation in classroom activities (e.g., citizenship standard simplified to drawing a flag), and redefining may result contrived connections to the standard (e.g., historical perspective standard redefined to using a daily schedule). Either of these approaches may lead to educators spending an inordinate amount of time connecting the functional curriculum to standards that are not truly related. The time may be better spent developing inclusive standards that take into account the functional curriculum that is necessary for these students.

Regardless of how the standards are described, the crux of the issue is that the standards that form the basis of the alternate assessments must reflect the curricular domains typically accessed by this student population (e.g., functional academic, communication, social, self-care, and vocational skills). Without this fundamental connection between the assessment and the curriculum, the assessment results will not support informed decision-making regarding how well special education programs are meeting the needs of students and what system improvements are indicated. States that have developed broad-based standards (e.g., students will use mathematical concepts to solve problems in daily life) find that they are more easily applied to students with disabilities than more narrowly defined standards (e.g., students will master algebraic functions).

Eligibility

Eligibility is the determination of which students should participate in the alternate assessment. It is expected that the majority of students with disabilities (98%) will participate in the general statewide testing, either under typical testing procedures or through the use of accommodations (Ysseldyke et al., 1997). The remaining

students (i.e., the 1-2% with severe disabilities) will participate in alternate assessments, as use of the general education tests, even with appropriate accommodations, would not yield meaningful or useful information. The students participating in alternate assessment are usually described as those having the most severe cognitive deficits or multiple disabilities (Ysseldyke & Olsen, 1999), students enrolled in self-care, life skills, or functional programs, and students not pursuing general education outcomes (Warlick & Olsen, 1999). IDEA 97 mandated that members of the IEP team (i.e., those deemed to know the student best) make the eligibility determination. It is important that alternate assessments are viewed as a valid assessment for a specific group of students and are not used to keep students, who for a variety of reasons are not expected to do well on the general assessment, from "bringing down" the general assessment results (Langenfeld, Thurlow, & Scott, 1997).

Some state guidelines regarding eligibility focus on disability classifications (e.g., severely mentally impaired, multiply impaired, autistic), while others take a curricular focus (e.g., functional or lifeskills programs) (Warlick & Olsen, 1999). Many states also list criteria *not* to be used for the eligibility decision, such as academic delays due to excessive absences, lack of instruction, social or cultural factors, disruptive behavior, or expectation of poor performance (Thompson et al., 2001). Many factors must be taken into account to determine eligibility for an alternate assessment. Using only the student's disability category, for example, may lead to students capable of taking the general assessment (e.g., some students categorized as having autism) who are instead participating in the alternate assessment, and making the determination based on the student's curriculum may overlook the possibility that the student might benefit from more access to the general curriculum. States often list several criteria, all of which must be met in order for a student to be eligible for the alternate assessment. For example, Nebraska's criteria include documentation that the student's demonstrated cognitive ability and adaptive behavior prevent completion of the general curriculum even with appropriate modifications, that the student's curriculum is primarily functional, and that he/she requires individualized instruction to acquire, maintain, and generalize skills (Hill, Bird, & Dughman, 2000).

Forms of Assessment

Assessment systems must be developed to measure progress towards the standards. General education has relied heavily on standardized achievement testing to measure student progress (Elliott, Braden, & White, 2001). As noted previously, this type of assessment does not yield useful information for students with severe disabilities. A number of different forms for alternate assessment have been selected by the states. The National Center on Educational Outcomes identified four general categories: portfolio assessment, checklist/rating scale of functional skills, IEP analysis, and other. The term portfolio is used to refer to any collection of materials and/or data for a specific student, and varies a great deal from state to state. Portfolios may consist of any combination of the following: work samples, audio and/or video clips, anecdotal records, surveys, adaptive behavior checklists, attendance reports, daily schedules, data charts, and communication systems (Thompson & Thurlow, 2001; Warlick & Olsen, 1999). In addition to measures of student performance, access to multiple settings, interaction with peers without disabilities, skill generalization, use of natural supports, and use of age-appropriate materials/activities may be measured when evaluating the portfolios (Warlick & Olsen, 1999).

A few states have created alternate assessments consisting of locally developed checklists or rating scales of functional skills, which are completed by teachers and/or IEP teams (Thompson & Thurlow, 2001). Domains assessed through these checklists include functional academics, communication skills, domestic skills, and vocational skills. Checklists and rating scales are less time consuming to complete than portfolios, and could be standardized, but vary in the amount and quality of information they yield. Progress could be charted through the use of rating scales and checklists that are administered semi-annually or annually.

Five states are analyzing student IEPs as the alternate assessment. IEP goals are categorized into domains and assessed according to rate of progress and/or level of support required to achieve the goal (Thompson & Thurlow, 2001). Thurlow (2000) points out that measuring only progress on IEP goals may lower expectations and lead to the conclusion that any amount of progress is acceptable. The intention of the IEP process has always been that the goals would be assessed throughout the school year, thus this method is an extension of that procedure, and it may be difficult to make any kind of comparison across students or programs given that the goals are so individualized. States categorized as "other" reported using data from eligibility assessment, out-of-level testing, and assessments conducted by the IEP team (Thompson & Thurlow, 2001).

Scoring of Assessments

Alternate assessments are scored by a variety of professionals under a variety of circumstances. States have developed systems in which teachers score the assessments of their own students, teachers score the assessments of students other than their own, state department of education staff score the assessments of all students, or a combination is employed, such as teachers and state department staff score the assessments and results are compared (Warlick & Olsen, 1999). Teachers in Kentucky found they had difficulty maintaining objectivity when scoring their own students' portfolios (Kleinert, Kearns, & Kennedy, 1997). Training for those scoring alternate assessments, scoring assessments for students of other teachers, and having more than one person score each assessment may help overcome the issue of objectivity.

Reporting

IDEA 97 requires that participation and performance results of alternate assessments be reported, but does not provide specific instruction for doing so. States are therefore left to determine the most appropriate methods of reporting results, and to make decisions about whether to aggregate the results of alternate assessments with the results of the general assessments. The issue of aggregation of results is further complicated by the performance descriptors used to summarize assessment results. General education accountability assessments are typically summarized by classifying results into descriptive categories such as mastery, near mastery, and partial mastery. Alternate assessment systems have followed this lead, however they have not always used descriptors that match those used for the general assessment in their state. Using different descriptors would make aggregation with the scores of the general assessment difficult, while using the same descriptors allows all "mastery" scores (general or alternate) to be easily combined. Using the same descriptors and equally weighting them from either the general or alternate assessment does not, however, resolve the issues (discussed below) inherent in aggregating scores from very different assessments. Of the states that have determined the descriptors, about half have chosen descriptors that are the same as those used in the general assessment, and half have chosen different descriptors (Thompson & Thurlow, 2001).

Bechard (2001) discussed the pros and cons of different models currently in use or proposed by various states to report assessment data. Aggregating the data, reporting the scores of all assessments (general and alternate) together, allows students who participate in alternate assessment to "count" as much as those who use the general assessment, and perhaps compels schools to place the same level of importance on the results of the alternate assessments as on the general assessments. However, questions of statistical soundness are raised by the aggregation of results from what may be very different types of assessments, as well as a danger of the scores of this very small part of the total group (less than two per cent) being overlooked upon aggregation. If high stakes are attached to assessment results, a district may be more inclined to put resources into improving the scores of the larger number of students using the general assessment rather than into improving the scores of students with severe disabilities, which represent less than two per cent of the total scores. In response to these issues, some states have decided to report the scores in both aggregated and disaggregated forms. That is, they will report combined results that include both assessments and also report results of each of the assessments separately. This model places equal value on both types of assessment and communicates more information overall, but does not address the issue of the appropriateness of aggregating scores from different assessments. Another approach is to keep the general and alternate assessments completely separate. This approach avoids the statistical soundness issue by not aggregating scores, but reporting such a small number of alternate assessment scores separately may cause them to be overshadowed by the results of the general assessment. Thirty states currently have a system in place to report alternate assessments; ten of these report results aggregated with general assessment scores, and twenty report alternate assessment scores separately (Thompson & Thurlow, 2001). Many states are working on a process which will aggregate the scores of alternate assessments with general assessment scores, and also resolve the statistical issues such aggregation raises.

The 1997 Reauthorization of IDEA required states to develop alternate assessments that would allow even students with the most severe disabilities to participate in statewide testing. After determining eligibility for participation in the alternate assessments, states initially had to decide from what standards they would develop the assessment. Most states report expanding the general standards to include functional skills. A number of different strategies were then used to develop the alternate assessments, including portfolios (work samples, anecdotal records, videotape, etc.), checklists/rating scales, and IEP analysis. One of the least defined areas of alternate

assessment remains reporting of scores. IDEA 97 mandated reporting, but did not offer specific guidance. States that have determined a method of reporting are usually reporting alternate assessments separately from the general assessments, but are working on a process that would allow all scores to be aggregated. It will be important to monitor the process of alternate assessment development and implementation to ensure that the educational needs of students with severe disabilities are included in the overall evaluations of school effectiveness.

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SCREENING FOR VISION PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

Importance of Screening for Vision Problems

Vision and hearing are the two primary senses by which we learn. When one of these senses is impaired, the other sense assumes an even more significant role in an individual's learning. Vision problems occur at a greater incidence in the deaf population than in the general population (Prickett & Prickett, 1992). In particular, individuals with hearing impairments may be more at risk for syndromes or conditions in which vision is affected. One specific syndrome that results in a vision loss for individuals who are hard of hearing or deaf is Usher syndrome, a genetic disorder in which hearing loss generally occurs at birth or shortly thereafter. A progressive loss of vision due to retinitis pigmentosa (a degeneration of the retina of the eyes) begins later in life, usually before adolescence. Approximately 3-6% of the hard of hearing population and 3-6% of the deaf population are estimated to have Usher syndrome. In addition to this syndrome, there are numerous other conditions that increase the possibility that individuals who are hard of hearing or deaf might also have impaired vision.

When an individual already has a diagnosed hearing impairment, vision becomes much more significant in the instruction and learning process as well as more important in social and communicative exchanges. Early identification of visual impairments for those individuals who are hard of hearing or deaf can help the individual, family, and teacher to acquire the information needed to appropriately meet the individual's needs.

Because most teaching methods used in the education of students who are hard of hearing or deaf rely upon those students having good vision, teachers often need to adapt instructional methodologies. Unfortunately, teachers of students who are hard of hearing or deaf frequently do not have the training or information needed to teach those students who have additional visual impairments (Prickett & Prickett, 1992). Often specific information can be provided to these teachers and adaptations that address the vision impairment can easily be incorporated into educational settings. At times students may need to have corrective lenses prescribed or may need to be encouraged to wear glasses they already have. Some students will need to wear corrective lenses for all activities and others will need glasses only for close work such as reading. It is important that the teachers of students who are hard of hearing or deaf understand the specific educational implications for those students who also have visual impairments. Such information can help the individual, parents, and teachers better plan for education, vocational experiences, and career planning taking into account the combined hearing and vision losses. Additionally, appropriate related educational services can be provided (e.g., orientation and mobility). Addressing the combined vision and hearing loss, can increase the effectiveness of instruction for these students

Given the importance of vision for students who are hard of hearing or deaf and the increased incidence of vision problems among these individuals, it is important that comprehensive screening for vision problems occurs regularly for these students. The purpose of this project is to discuss a statewide initiative to screen vision and related areas of students already identified with hearing impairments.

Screening Project Description

The Nevada Dual Sensory Impairment Project, a statewide technical assistance project funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, initiated this statewide screening project. Prior to implementing the screening project, we drafted procedures and had them reviewed by the Nevada Dual Sensory Impairment Project Advisory Committee. Important input from the Advisory Committee included suggestions regarding (a) the format of the parent/guardian permission forms, (b) the parent and teacher cover letters, (c) development of a fact sheet highlighting the importance of screening vision for students with hearing impairments, and (d) strategies to be in place regarding referrals. After these suggestions were implemented, we approached a local school district to pilot the procedures.

Pilot Project

We piloted the project with 40 children in seven classrooms located in six different schools. These children ranged in age from preschool (one student turned 3 years old the day we were screening) to middle school age. The pilot project assisted us in determining needs as well as strengths prior to moving to the statewide initiative. For example, we were praised for patience displayed with the children (especially the younger children), providing written feedback for the school and families, and the "smoothness" with which the screening was conducted. However, we also gained important information about the size of the room needed, the need to have duplicate screening materials on hand, and the need to compile packets that followed the student from station to station rather than having individual forms at each station.

Beginning the Statewide Initiative

In Nevada, the special education administrators have regular meetings facilitated by the Nevada Department of Education. Early in the school year we presented at one of the administrator meetings to solicit administrator agreement to participate, district contact information, and potential dates for the district. To gain administrator agreement we presented them with (a) a brief rationale for the screening project, (b) school district commitment (see Table 1), (c) Nevada Dual Sensory Impairment Project commitment (see Table 1), (e) screening project overview (see Table 1), (f) general discussion of screening project stations (see Table 2), and (g) potential benefits of participating.

Table 1
School District Commitment, Project Commitment, and Screening Overview

SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITMENT	NEVADA DUAL SENSORY IMPAIRMENT PROJECT COMMITMENT	SCREENING PROJECT OVERVIEW
1. Indicate interest or agreement in participating	1. Provide permission forms and questionnaires	1. Obtain parent / guardian permission
2. Notify relevant teachers and school nurses	2. Provide materials for the screening stations	2. Parents / caregivers complete questionnaires identifying behavioral indicators and potential hereditary indicators
3. Have teachers send packets prepared by project to parents or caregivers	3. Invite school nurses and others to participate as requested by the district	3. Teachers complete questionnaires identifying behavioral indicators
4. Have teachers complete behavioral indicators checklist for each student	4. Provide people to conduct each station	4. Complete screening stations at the school site
5. Ensure space for the screening stations (i.e., one dark room and a large room)	5. Summarize the results for each student	
	6. Send the results to the school nurse and/or teacher (with an extra copy for the family)	
	7. Provide follow-up assistance as requested	
	8. Provide guidelines for sites to replicate the process	

Table 2
Overview of Screening Station Procedures and Materials

SCREENING STATION	MATERIALS	PROCEDURES
Color Vision	*Pseudo-Isochromatic Plates for Testing Color Vision* Good-lite P.O. Box 387 Steamwood, IL 60107 1-800-362-3860 http://www.good-lite.com/	Students can either trace trails or read numbers.
Near Vision	*LH Symbol Tests* Lighthouse Low Vision Products 36-02 Northern Boulevard Long Island City, NY 11101 1-800-453-4923	1. Follow the directions that accompany the test. 2. Begin with binocular testing and then move to each eye separately. 3. Record acuity.
Distance Vision	*Single Symbol Book* Precision Vision 944 First Street La Salle IL 61301 815-223-2022	1. Follow the directions that accompany the test. 2. Begin with binocular testing and then move to each eye separately. 3. Record acuity.
Visual Field	No materials needed	*Wiggling Fingers Test*: 1. Position one person behind the child and one in front of the child. 2. Ask the child to look straight ahead at the person's nose and to tell the person when she sees the wiggling fingers. 3. Document the point at which the student could first see the fingers. 4. Repeat for both horizontal and vertical planes.
Balance	No materials needed	Conduct both tests. *Feet Together:* 1. Student stands feet together, arms stretched out, eyes open. 2. Examiner stands behind and gently pushes on either side of student's torso. Repeat as needed. 3. Repeat with eyes closed. 4. Document. *One Foot in Front of Other:* 1. Student stands one foot in front of other, arms stretched out, eyes open. 2. Examiner stands behind and gently pushes on either side of student's torso. Repeat as needed. 3. Repeat with eyes closed. 4. Document.
Dark Adaptation	*Cone Adaptation Test* Vision Associates 7512 Dr Phillips Blvd. #50-316 Orlando, FL 32819 407-352-1200	1. As a practice test with the lights on, mix the squares on a dark table or carpet and ask the student to sort them into 3 groups: red, white, and blue. 2. Dim the lights to simulate twilight or dusk. Ask the child to sort the squares. Document the time and number of squares sorted correctly.

Results of Statewide Screening Project

Sixteen of the 17 districts in the state indicated their willingness to participate in this screening project. However, four rural districts did not have any children identified as having hearing impairments. A fifth district sent their students to a neighboring district to receive services and thus would receive the opportunity to participate in the screening in that district. A sixth district agreed to participate but no parental permission forms were returned and so we were unable to complete any of the screening procedures with the students in that district. Thus, a total of 10 districts scattered throughout Nevada participated in the screening project. Within these 10 districts we screened a total of 176 students from 35 different schools. Table 3 provides an overview of the number of schools, students, and visits for each district.

Table 3
Overview of Number of Schools, Students, and Visits

School District	Number of Schools We Visited	Number of Students Screened	Number of Visits to Each District
District 1	5	19	3
District 2	3	7	2
District 3	4	88	5
District 4	Students brought to campus	2	Students brought to campus—2 visits
District 5	2	2	1
District 6	2	2	1
District 7	Students brought to central location	13	1
District 8	1	1	1
District 9	2	2	1
District 10	6	40	8

The number of students who had difficulty in completing aspects of the screening is as follows:

Color Vision:	2 students
Near Vision:	30 students
Distance Vision:	44 students
Visual Field:	5 students
Balance:	18 students
Dark Adaptation:	0 students

Please note that that one student could be referred or receive recommendations for more than one area (e.g., near vision and distance vision).

Discussion

As can be seen from the number of students listed above, a substantial number of students screened had difficulties in passing the screening tests. These screening tests cannot be considered as a definitive tests for visual impairments. However, a large number of these students were referred to an eye care professional. For other students, teachers benefited from recommendations about how to make accommodations for a documented visual condition. For example, one student had 20/20 vision in one eye; however, he was legally blind in the other eye, even with correction. Although this student does not technically qualify as a student with a visual impairment, his visual condition obviously has implications for classroom instruction. As was the case for this specific student, we discovered that many teachers did not even know of these types of visual conditions. In other instances we were

told that students had corrective lenses at one time and that they were lost or that it was thought they were no longer needed. In some cases, students had their eyeglasses with them and we were able to screen both without and with the glasses. In each instance where the student thought that he or she no longer needed to wear eyeglasses, the student actually passed the screening wearing the glasses (when they would have failed without them). In these instances, we were able to promote the importance of the eyeglasses to the student, family, and teacher.

Obviously, potential benefits of a screening project such as this one are numerous. Perhaps the most important benefit is that students who already have an impairment in one of the most important senses for learning (i.e., hearing) and who do not pass the screening will be referred to an eye care professional. As a result of an in-depth examination by an eye care professional, appropriate recommendations can then be made for the student. Some students might need corrective lenses as well as specific accommodations in the classroom. Others will need only corrective lenses. Still others might find out that they have a progressive visual condition. A progressive visual loss can be particularly difficult for students. These students may adapt to the loss as the deterioration gradually occurs, not even realizing that they have a vision problem. Some students identified with a progressive loss have reported that they thought everyone saw the way they did; they did not know their vision was different. For students with a progressive loss, a key benefit of a screening project is the follow-up training and technical assistance that the team can access.

As students, families, and teachers become aware of the importance of vision for those who already have a hearing impairment, all can be sensitive to indicators of the need to have vision checked. Subsequently, accommodations can be made to meet the students' needs so that they are receiving an appropriate education.

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SUCCESS WITH RELUCTANT RESEARCHERS: REAL LIFE EXPERIENCES IN A RURAL SCHOOL SETTING

For 5 years, a collaborative team consisting of a special education teacher, a general education teacher, and a university professor conducted research studies in a rural secondary school setting. Although the general education teacher initially was reluctant to participate in a research project, especially one that involved students with disabilities, the model they developed proved to be successful, resulting in five publications in refereed special education journals and numerous benefits for the adults and students who were involved.

The university professor made the initial contact with the general education teacher, asking if she would be interested in participating in research studies that involved students with low incidence disabilities in inclusive activities with students without disabilities. When the general education teacher agreed (with reservations), the university professor contacted a special education teacher whose classroom in the same building served as a site for university practica. In the beginning of this collaborative arrangement, the general education teacher, who taught English, composition, and speech, had no experience with special education or applied research. The special education teacher had completed an applied research project in her classroom to meet the thesis requirement for her graduate degree and, although she provided inclusive experiences for her students, she had never worked with the general education teacher. The university professor had developed a research agenda focusing on systematic instruction for students with moderate/severe disabilities and visited the rural school on a regular basis to supervise the field experiences of students from her program at the University of Kentucky.

To develop the subsequent research projects, the team met and delineated duties. The university professor would design the studies with input from the teachers, making sure that the skills that would be taught would be functional for the students involved. In addition, the university professor would be responsible for securing funding for any incurred costs (e.g., mileage, instructional materials), securing permission from the university and the school system, training teachers and students in research procedures (e.g., instructional methods, data collection), collecting weekly reliability data, conducting formative and summative analyses of the data, preparing and submitting the results for publication, and making requested revisions upon acceptance for publication. Initially, the general education teacher was responsible for assigning students from her classes to participate in the project as peer tutors or buddies while the special education teacher supervised or conducted instruction within the special education setting. As the line of research evolved, the special education teacher became responsible for adapting materials and scheduling students with disabilities for the project in the general education teacher's classroom. In addition, the special education teacher prepared the general education students for interactions with students with disabilities while the general education teacher assigned and collected writing assignments in her class that focused on the projects (e.g., pre- and post-project reaction papers, narrative descriptions of the projects). The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 requires that all students complete portfolios of their work. Project outcomes provided alternate

portfolios entries for the students with disabilities (e.g., instructional data, evidence of integrated activities) and English portfolio entries for the students without disabilities (e.g., written narratives, prose, poetry).

Over a span of 5 years, the success of one research project led to another as the team members disseminated the results of their projects through publications in refereed journals and presentations at local (e.g., Kentucky Council for Exceptional Children) and national (e.g., Association for Applied Behavior Analysis) conferences. The university professor was able to secure funding for some of the projects from campus resources (e.g., Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute), but the team agreed to conduct the research projects even when this funding was not available.

All of the participants in the projects benefited. The general education students, especially those in advanced classes who had never interacted with peers with low incidence disabilities, became more accepting of those students and were able to translate their experiences to written portfolio entries. The students with disabilities increased their circle of friends and developed alternate portfolio entries that documented acquisition of functional skills as well as integrated activities with peers without disabilities. Over time, the general education teacher became more willing to work with students with a variety of disabilities, a practice she has continued beyond her involvement in the projects. The special education teacher learned more about adapting the general education curriculum for her students and became more visible in the school setting. The university professor continued a line of rural research focusing on instructional procedures for students with low incidence disabilities that has been disseminated to a wide audience.

The team found that one study seemed to lead to another as the role of the general education students evolved from peer tutors to peer buddies and the responsibility for interactions with the students with disabilities shifted from the special education teacher to the general education teacher. During some projects, the team expanded to include other school personnel (i.e., special education teacher, general education teacher) who were interested in participating. The abstracts for each of the studies conducted by the collaborative team are listed below in the order in which the studies were implemented.

Collins, Branson, and Hall (1995): Peer tutors used a constant time delay procedure to teach adolescents with moderate mental disabilities to read key words from the actual labels of cooking products. They presented definitions of the identified key words as incidental information in the feedback statements. To facilitate generalization, the student used a variety of peers and two brands per product (instant hot chocolate, muffin mix, and microwave popcorn). The special education teacher conducted generalization probes using a novel product brand during a cooking activity. The students with disabilities mastered the reading of target key words in a relatively short amount of time with minimal errors, acquired some incidental learning of cooking definitions, and were able to generalize the skill across novel materials, persons, and settings.

Collins, Hall, and Branson (1997): A collaborative effort between by a university investigator, a special education teacher, and an English teacher involved teaching four leisure skills (i.e., playing cards, selecting a television program, playing a sports videotape, and playing a computer game) to 4 secondary students with moderate disabilities. The special education teacher used a system of least prompts procedure to teach the targeted skills, and nondisabled peers from an advanced English class assessed generalization across persons on an intermittent schedule. The results indicate that the collaborative project had benefits to both groups of students that included an increase in positive attitudes of the nondisabled peers toward their peers with disabilities.

Collins, Hall, Rankin, and Branson, (1999): This project taught students with disabilities to say "no" and to walk away from peers who confronted them with peer pressure in a secondary setting. The special education teachers used a constant time delay procedure to model the correct response, and peers without disabilities acted as confederates to apply peer pressure during probe trials in natural conditions.

Collins, Branson, Hall, and Rankin (2001): The English teacher and peer tutors used a system of least prompts procedure to teach 4 secondary students with moderate disabilities to write letters within a secondary composition class setting. While students without disabilities simultaneously worked on composition assignments, they taught the students with disabilities to write letters that included the following four components: (a) heading, (b) greeting, (c) content body, and (d) closing. A multiple probe across students design evaluated the effectiveness of the procedure. The English teacher collected supplementary data regarding the attitudes of the composition class

students toward the students with disabilities who participated in their class. The results indicate that it is possible to reliably incorporate direct instruction on functional academic skills within an inclusive setting. However, support for the regular education classroom teacher is desirable. Issues regarding isolation within the academic setting and limited teacher interaction are
discussed.

Collins, Hall, Branson, and Holder (2002): Two secondary students with moderate disabilities (one per classroom) attended Advanced English classes with peers without disabilities in a rural high school. In additional to conducting planned daily instruction each English teacher also systematically presented three sets of nontargeted information (two facts per set) to each student with disabilities during the course of the class using a parallel treatments design. Each set of nontargeted information included a fact related to the English class (e.g., "Begin each sentence with a capital letter") and a fact not related to the English class (e.g., "The governor of Kentucky is Paul Patton"). The special education teacher conducted daily probe sessions to document acquisition. Of the six facts presented to each student with disabilities, one student acquired two related facts and one unrelated fact, while the other student acquired two related and two unrelated facts. This investigation implies that students who are fully included can acquire nontargeted information presented by the regular classroom teacher during the course of a typical class and that teachers can facilitate learning by planning to present such information in a systematic fashion.

Working on applied collaborative research projects can be beneficial for rural teachers who may feel isolated and have less access to the development of best practices in university settings. Teachers who are willing to open their classrooms for research may find that university faculty are grateful for the opportunity to use their setting for applied projects. In addition, teachers who participate in research build self-confidence in their ability to problem-solve and make decisions based on data. They also develop best practices that are beneficial to their students and to the field of education. Finally, participants may find that the personal relationships that develop during a collaborative research project often extend far beyond the school setting and create open channels for exchanging ideas once the research project has ended.

For those who are interested in developing a collaborative research project in a rural setting, the following guidelines are offered.

1. Take initiative in contacting collaborative team members. The chances are great that, if you have a willing attitude and ideas to share, others will want to work with you.

2. Brainstorm in a casual setting. Meet at a coffee shop or in a home. Get to know each other before you commit to working together.

3. Review the published literature for research ideas. Nearly all research publications end with suggestions for future research. In addition, journals geared toward practitioners (e.g., Teaching Exceptional Children) are full of good ideas that need to be verified in data-based studies.

4. Focus on teaching skills that are functional for students with disabilities. Check IEPs for skills that are targeted for instruction and then come up with novel ways of teaching them.

5. Make sure that there are clear benefits for students without disabilities. Use project involvement as an opportunity to educate students about disabilities and to facilitate friendships. Students without disabilities who help implement a project feel important when they are told they are part of a study that will have national influence when it is published. Be sure to stress confidentiality in working with students.

6. Clearly delineate team responsibilities. For example, the university member can be responsible for securing permissions, searching for funding, and finding an appropriate research design. The teachers can be responsible for scheduling, instruction, and data collection. For a checklist for conducting field-based research, see Hemmeter, Doyle, Collins, and Ault (1996).

7. Consider using a single subject research design (e.g., multiple probe design across behaviors or students) since this can be easily implemented in an applied setting and does not require statistical analysis.

8. Before beginning, write a clear overview of the procedures to be used in the investigation and list team responsibilities. Use nontechnical terms so there are no misunderstandings. Give each member a copy and send a copy to appropriate persons (e.g., university Institutional Review Board, local school board, school principal) when securing permission prior to beginning the study.

9. Prior to beginning a study, secure permission from all who will be involved. Since most students are under the age of consent, permission will need to come from their legal guardians. Use pseudonyms in place of students' names in reporting results.

10. Allow at least a full semester for any project. Expect the unforeseen (e.g., school closing, absentees, attrition).

11. Hold weekly meetings once the project is underway. Let the data guide the team in making modifications to the project.

12. Once the results are compiled, create a plan for disseminating the results. Even if the study did not go as planned, others can learn from the results. Publications and presentations can take the form of data-based analyses for researchers or practical guidelines for practitioners.

13. Let the results of one project provide the seed for the next. Don't be surprised when you hear a team member say, "Next time we should change the way we did this and try this new idea I have instead." Also, listen to students. Sometimes their feedback can be of particular value in refining future projects.

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